HISTORY
OF THE
FRENCH NAVY

FROM THE BEGINNINGS OF THE MONARCHY
UNTIL THE PEACE TREATY OF 1763

BY
E. CHEVALIER
NAVY CAPTAIN

PARIS
LIBRAIRIE HACHETTE ET Cie
79, BOULEVARD SAINT-GERMAIN, 79
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HISTORY
OF THE
FRENCH NAVY

FROM THE EARLY MONARCHY
UNTIL THE PEACE TREATY OF 1763[1]

1

WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

The History of the French Navy during the American War of Independence. Paris, Hachette. Price ... 7 fr . 50

The History of the French Navy under the First Republic. Paris, Hachette. Price. 7 fr . 50

The History of the French Navy under the Consulate and the Empire. Paris, Hachette. Price . 7 fr . 50

The History of the French Navy from 1815 to 1870. - Paris, Hachette. Price . 7 fr . 50

The four volumes listed above, with this new volume, form the history of the French Navy from the beginnings of the monarchy to the year 1870.

The French Navy and the German Navy during the War of 1870–71. Paris, Plon. Price 3 fr. 50

The Institutions of the Navy. Equipment. Personnel. Writings. Paris, Augustin Challamel. Price . .[2]

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PREFACE

When one studies the history of the French Navy from Colbert, to the fall of the First Empire, at which point we cease to be at war with England, one is struck by the instability of institutions and the mobility of opinion regarding this important aspect of national defense. The influence that the Navy can exert on the greatness and prosperity of France appears one day and disappears the next. The successes achieved during the first part of the reign of Louis XIV, with the Duquesnes, the Tourvilles, and the Jean Barts, led to the Navy being considered necessary, but after the defeats suffered under the reign of Louis XV, it lost all importance in the eyes of the country. The American War of Independence brought the Navy back into focus; opinion moved away from it again following the wars of the Revolution and the Empire. When the financial situation imposed on us the necessity of restricting expenditure, we did not proceed with a methodical reduction, leaving France with a naval force weak in terms of numbers, but strong in quality. We declared that the navy was useless; warships were lent or rented to individuals and we went so far as to sell the equipment.[3]

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The administrators alone then disturb the silence of the arsenals. Traditions, which are the fruit of time, abruptly interrupted, are lost, and the result is a new cause of weakening. We do not see the evil where it is; public opinion, insufficiently informed, does not know that our defeats are the consequence, on the one hand, of institutions and, on the other hand, of the incapacity of those who, from Paris, direct military operations. The men placed at the head of the naval department are, too often, unable to fulfill their duties; neglecting the administration which is their main reason for being, they want above all to occupy themselves with maritime and military questions to which they are foreign.

We will show, by an example, the harm that can be done to his country by a minister who is obviously well-intentioned but incapable of fulfilling the duties of his office. By an error of judgment that is difficult to understand, Louis XIV appointed Pontchartrain, Comptroller General of Finance, to succeed Seignelay. The new minister occupied a post for which he had no aptitude and for which his past had not prepared him. Having taken office at the end of 1690, the new minister had to prepare for the following year's campaign. However, in 1691, the fleet was not ready in good time, and we do not have the number of ships that had been expected. Pontchartrain, little concerned with fulfilling the obligations incumbent upon him in a particular way, focused all his attention on the operations of the fleet that he intended to direct himself. Minister of the Navy for several months, he had personal ideas on squadron maneuvers. Far from having the thought of consulting Tourville, as Colbert would have done, he wants to impose his opinion on the most illustrious admiral of this period, and we see the latter obliged to show the minister, in long dispatches, the futility of the orders he receives.[4]

4

The minister, in long dispatches, emphasized the futility of the orders he received. Pontchartrain gave in, but he was not convinced, and Tourville put to sea with contradictory orders. Tourville's famous offshore campaign in 1691 aroused the admiration of all Europe, but it did not satisfy the minister and his advisors. It was then that the legend of a timid Tourville took root at the Ministry of the Navy, and soon at Versailles. In 1692, imperative orders were given to the head of our fleet, and the ministry's maritime combinations resulted in the disaster of La Hougue. Colbert's prudence and wisdom formed a striking contrast, which should be noted, with Pontchartrain's presumptuous ignorance. In matters relating to the navy, campaign plans and military operations, Duquesne was Colbert's constant advisor, and Seignelay, despite his imperious nature, sought Tourville's advice. Under the energetic leadership of these two ministers, the offices worked actively to provide the fleets with everything they needed. This was the often-forgotten role of the administration. The conduct of Colbert and Seignelay explains the successes achieved by the French fleets during their term of office. Ministers came and went, and most of them, far from imitating Colbert, seemed to take Pontchartrain as their model. There was a campaign plan that one would think was dictated by the enemy.

The strength of an army, whether naval or land, is in direct proportion to the value of its institutions; If these are bad, good results are not to be expected. No doubt can arise in this regard, and it may be considered as an axiom that, on land and at sea, reverses always coincide with the weakness of institutions.[5]

5

Now, in the course of this history, we see the naval institutions, constantly modified, exhibiting this particular characteristic: the most important element, that is to say, the maritime element, rarely has its due share, while the administration occupies a large place, one must even say too large a place. It follows from this state of affairs that the direction given to the various services of the department is necessarily somewhat incomplete; this direction is especially insufficient from both a maritime and military point of view. The account of the wars that France wages against England provides indisputable proof of this. We send to sea ships manned by brave crews, but without military training. Captured French ships always have a large number of men disabled, while, on enemy ships, only a few men are hit by our fire. Mast damage is more frequent on our ships than on enemy ships. Finally, the interior installations of our vessels do not always present favorable provisions for maneuvering and artillery service.

The substitution of steam ships for sailing ships has not changed the rules to be followed to obtain vessels that have nothing to fear from enemy ships of the same strength. The interior arrangements must, today as in the past, aim to facilitate the task of officers and crews, from both the navigation and combat points of view. It is necessary, as in the past, that combat personnel be instructed, and this is all the more necessary since the improvements in artillery and the speed of firing require highly trained men. We have to fear engine damage, which is more serious than mast damage. The Navy Department therefore cannot make too much effort to have an experienced mechanical staff. Only good institutions can bring about these important results.[6]

6

Now, one can only have good institutions if the maritime idea strongly permeates the direction given to all services. Any military history, whether of the navy or the army, would be incomplete if the examination of questions relating to campaign plans, organization, and personnel training did not accompany the account of the actual facts of war. Only by proceeding in this way is it possible to deduce lessons for the future from the past.

Four volumes of the history of the French navy, covering the period from 1778 to 1870, have already appeared. The first of these volumes is preceded by a preface containing a brief description, and only since Richelieu, of the maritime events that preceded the American War of Independence. This summary is necessarily incomplete. This new volume, intended to fill this gap, forms, with the volumes already published, the history of the French navy from the beginnings of the monarchy until 1870.[7]

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HISTORY
OF THE
FRENCH NAVY

BOOK ONE

First maritime expeditions. - Charlemagne organizes coastal defenses. - Incursions, under his successors, by the Saracens and the Normans. - Rollon. - William the Conqueror. - The so-called territorial wars begin between France and England. - The Crusades.

I

Clovis, whose reign dates back to 481, founded the French monarchy by extending his authority over Gaul. If events had not changed this situation, the navy would have immediately become a necessary element of the country's defense. Clovis was the first to undermine his work by deciding that his kingdom would be divided among his four sons. Upon his death in 511, France found itself divided into several states whose sovereigns were continually at war with each other. Under these conditions, the struggle remained concentrated on land.[8]

8

Only two expeditions in which the navy took part are recorded under the kings of the first line. In 519, one of Clovis's sons, Theodoric, King of Austrasia, armed a fleet to combat Danish pirates who had entered the Meuse. An army under the command of Theodebert, son of Theodoric, marched against them. The Danes, surprised as they were about to re-embark, were defeated, and their fleet, joined by that of the King of Austrasia, suffered heavy losses. In 735, Charles Martel, then at war with the Frisians, wanted to support his army's operations with an attack from the sea. A large fleet landed troops that inflicted a bloody defeat on the enemy.

Before going any further, we will indicate the meaning to be given to the expressions "fleets and naval armies," used by the chroniclers of this period. Formerly, says Father Daniel in his History of the French Militia, "naval armies were mainly composed of merchant vessels captured in ports and armed for war, using soldiers borrowed from coastal garrisons." These were not, in fact, fleets per se, intended to destroy another fleet. The objective of maritime expeditions was to descend into enemy territory, to ravage or conquer it. The only role played by ships was to transport troops, and this is how we will see things unfold until the establishment of a permanent navy. The maritime borders of France, under the reign of Charlemagne, if we except the coast of the part of Spain which did not belong to us, extended from the mouth of the Tiber to the extremity of Germany, that is to say, as far as Denmark.[9]

9

It was necessary to protect this long stretch of coastline, in the Ocean, against the attacks of Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, and Irish pirates, known as Normans, and in the Mediterranean, against the Saracens. To meet this dual requirement, the emperor organized a navy; flotillas were stationed at the mouths of major rivers to defend access and ensure the safety of the surrounding shores. Several expeditions in the Mediterranean made the use of the navy necessary. Charlemagne seized Corsica and Sardinia, and defeated Nicephorus' Greek fleet in the Adriatic. Upon the death of the great emperor, things changed; the springs of government weakened and disorganization began. However, under Louis the Pious, the system of defense created by Charlemagne, retaining a remnant of vigor, the Saracens and the Normans were contained. In 843, the monarchical unity, founded by Charlemagne, was destroyed. The Treaty of Vervins divided the empire between the three sons of Louis the Pious, Charles the Bald, Louis the German and Lothair. The navy, long neglected, disappeared, leaving the coasts open to pirate raids. The Saracens appeared on the banks of the Rhone, at Aigues-Mortes, Marseille, Arles, in the Camargue; they penetrated as far as Dauphiné, Rouergue, Limousin and Saintonge. The Saracens did not seek to establish themselves in our country; after having taken some booty, they disappeared.

The Normans had first penetrated inland through the mouth of the Scheldt; the Seine was the second river they sailed up, and the Loire the third. In 844, Norman boats, laden with men, crossed the mouth of the Gironde; they put to sea again some time later, carrying considerable booty.[10]

10

The pirates, encouraged by the lack of resistance they faced, laid siege to Bordeaux in 847. They failed in this attempt, but the following year they captured the city, which they pillaged and set on fire. Toulouse suffered the same fate in 850. In 885, during the reign of Charles the Fat, the Normans, after capturing Rouen, sailed up the Seine and besieged Paris. Their fleet, which numbered no fewer than seven hundred boats, carried, according to chroniclers, forty thousand men. The Parisians, animated by the exhortations of their bishop Gozlin, led by the son of Robert the Strong, Eudes, who was as skillful as he was brave, repelled all the attacks of the enemy. The latter, recognizing the futility of his efforts, withdrew. Rollon, one of the boldest leaders that the Normans had at their head, had established himself on the banks of the Lower Seine, and from there he rushed into the interior of the country, sowing ruin and death in his path. In the state of anarchy in which the kingdom found itself, Charles the Simple, unable to gather sufficient forces to subdue the Norman leader, decided to negotiate. In accordance with the terms of a treaty signed in the village of Saint-Clair-sur-Epte in 911, Rollon, to whom Charles the Simple gave his daughter in marriage, became the hereditary sovereign of Neustria, which from then on took the name of Normandy. Rollon and his companions converted to Christianity. The Normans, although they were peacefully established in Neustria, retained their taste for war and adventurous expeditions. More than a century before the Crusades, they made pilgrimages to the Holy Land.[11]

11

During their voyages across the Mediterranean, various circumstances brought them to Italy. A Norman, Robert Guiscard, son of Tancred of Hauteville, a gentleman from the Pays de Caux, brought Apulia and Calabria under his dominion; his brother, Count Roger, conquered Sicily. The Normans were to distinguish themselves in an enterprise of greater importance. In 1066, William the Bastard, Duke of Normandy, claimed to be the heir of King Edward the Confessor, who had died without issue. The Anglo-Saxon national assembly having elected Harold, William resolved to invade England at the head of sixty thousand men. The army and fleet went to the mouth of the Dive, a river that flows into the English Channel, between the Seine and the Orne. After waiting a month for a favorable wind, the expedition set sail and dropped anchor at the anchorage of Saint-Valery, located at the mouth of the Somme. On September 27, the fleet, comprising nine hundred sail, headed for the coast of England; the next day, the army landed at Pevensey, in the county of Sussex. Shortly after, William, victorious at the Battle of Hastings, in which Harold, his competitor, was killed, became sovereign of Great Britain. William the Conqueror, remembering the services that the navy had rendered him, wanted to protect himself against the perils to which he himself would be exposed, if he were one day to find, on French soil, a competitor with sufficient means to cross the strait with an army. He granted the towns of Hastings, Romney, Hith, Dover and Sandwich, known as the "five ports", several privileges, on the condition that they would arm, for his service, fifty-seven warships. The first kings of the third race, having authority only in the provinces that belonged to them, the Ile-de-France and the Orléanais, did not have to concern themselves with the navy.[12]

12

Their reign, highly turbulent, was spent in continual wars between their great vassals. Under the reign of Louis VIII, who ascended the throne in 1137, territorial wars began between France and England, which we will see last for several centuries. This prince had married Eleanor of Guyenne, to whom belonged Aquitaine and Poitou, provinces separated from northern France since the partition of Charlemagne's empire. He repudiated her in 1152. Eleanor gave her hand and the two provinces that constituted her dowry to Henry Plantagenet, Count of Anjou and Duke of Normandy. Henry Plantagenet, who soon after became King of England, found himself in possession of the Duchy of Normandy, Touraine, Maine, Anjou, Poitou, and Aquitaine on the continent; he also had suzerainty over Brittany. Almost all of western France, from the Somme to the Pyrenees, belonged to him. Under these conditions, it was difficult for France to have a navy.

Philip Augustus, who reigned from 1180 to 1223, reunited Artois to the crown through his marriage to the niece of the Count of Flanders, then Valois, Amiens, and Vermandois, following a successful war. After having put the royalty out of control by these conquests, he took Normandy, Touraine, Maine, Anjou and part of Poitou from the English. Wanting to take advantage of the difficult situation in which John Lackland found himself, then in conflict with the Pope, Philip Augustus made preparations to invade England. Seventeen hundred ships were assembled, for this purpose, at the mouth of the Seine. The difficulties existing between Innocent III and John Lackland having been smoothed out, the king saw himself forced to abandon this enterprise. In 1214, Philip Augustus made war on the Count of Flanders who had allied himself with the King of England.[13]

13

The French fleet, under the command of Savary de Mauléon, a famous Poitevin privateer, took part in the army's operations. Some of our ships were anchored in the Dam Canal, north of Bruges, and others along the coast. The Counts of Boulogne and Salisbury, sent with five hundred ships to the aid of the Count of Flanders, upon learning that the French crews were off the town of Dam, forced their sails, joined our army, and immediately attacked; three hundred ships were captured and one hundred destroyed. The English landed the troops carried by their ships, but Philip Augustus, who came in haste to save the wreckage of his fleet, inflicted a loss of two thousand men and forced them to re-embark. He set fire to his remaining ships, after removing their munitions and supplies.

In 1216, the English nobility, having revolted against John Lackland, called Louis, son of Philip Augustus, to the throne. Louis crossed the strait with seven hundred ships and landed his troops without encountering any resistance. Shortly after, with John Lackland dead, his son was proclaimed king. A second expedition, eighty ships strong, under the command of a former monk named Eustace, set sail from the ports of France, bringing relief to Philip Augustus's son. The five ports armed a fleet, command of which was entrusted to Philip d'Albinly. On August 27, 1217, the two armies met and action ensued. Most of the French ships were taken or sunk, and the commander of our fleet, accused of having committed depredations on the coasts of England, was beheaded.[14]

14

The monk Eustace, assuming that his previous conduct had been blameworthy, was covered by his position as commander of the French fleet; the English therefore committed, in this circumstance, an act of barbarity that nothing could justify, even if one were to refer to the customs of the time. The English, the chroniclers say, employed a dishonest stratagem from the very beginning of this battle; having the advantage of the wind, they threw powdered lime onto the French ships at the moment when the two armies were alongside each other. A large number of men, blinded, were unable to defend themselves. After the loss of this battle, Louis left England.

Louis VIII, who ascended the throne in 1223, proved himself a worthy successor to Philip Augustus; he seized Niort, Saint-Jean-d'Angély, the whole country below the Garonne, Limousin, Périgord, the Aunis region and La Rochelle. When he died in 1226, the English only possessed Gascony and Bordeaux. Louis IX successfully continued the struggle his predecessors had engaged in with the great vassals. The Treaty of Meaux, concluded in 1229, ended the coalition formed by the lords in the northern provinces and the crusade undertaken in the south against the Albigensians; this treaty also assured the possession of Languedoc to the crown of France. Having gained greater freedom of movement, the king took up arms against the English, defeating them in two encounters: at the Taillebourg Bridge on the Charente, and beneath the walls of Saintes. He fortified Calais and La Rochelle, and assembled a fleet tasked with ensuring coastal security.

Since the end of the 11th century, a movement, both political and religious, had been pushing the West against the East. The first crusade was undertaken in 1096 by French lords, and the second, in 1147, by Louis VII and Emperor Conrad; both took the land route to Constantinople.[15]

15

The third was led by Philip Augustus, Richard, King of England, and Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. The King of France and his troops embarked at Genoa. The fourth crusade, led by French and Venetian lords, resulted in the capture of Constantinople and the founding, in 1204, of a Latin Empire that lasted until 1261. The fifth was undertaken in 1217 by John of Brienne, a French lord, and Andrew, King of Hungary; and the sixth, in 1228, by Emperor Frederick II. The crusades had opened up a new avenue for navigation, which particularly benefited the Italian republics. The French navy had played only a very minor role in this great movement. The Seventh Crusade changed this situation in a way more favourable to our country. Saint Louis gathered at Aigues-Mortes, a port he had dug in the Mediterranean, as well as at Cette, Agde, Marseille and Toulon, eighteen hundred vessels of all sizes, barges, galleys, galleasses and double-decked ships, on which he embarked with his army. The fleet, which still included foreign ships, nevertheless included a large number of French vessels. Saint Louis, having left Aigues-Mortes on 25 August 1248, went to Cyprus where he spent the winter. In March of the following year, the French fleet put to sea again, heading towards Egypt; The army was landed in front of Damietta, which it captured after defeating the Saracens. We know the unfortunate end of this crusade. Victorious at Mansourah, the French, decimated by an epidemic disease, were forced to retreat. The retreat took place in disastrous conditions; Saint Louis, who was standing in the rearguard, ready to devote himself for the salvation of all, fell into the hands of the enemy.[16]

16

Returned to freedom, after having delivered Damietta for his ransom, and a sum of approximately ten million francs for that of his army, he went to Palestine where he spent four years before returning to France. Saint Louis undertook a new crusade in 1270; this one had Tunisia as its objective. The troops landed not far from ancient Carthage, but shortly after landing, the plague broke out in the French camp and claimed many victims. The king, struck down by the scourge, died on August 25, 1270.

Charles of Anjou, brother of Saint Louis, had seized the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies in 1268. In Palermo, on Easter Monday in the year 1282, at the hour of Vespers, the French were massacred; all the towns of the island followed this example. The Sicilians, fearing the reprisals that Charles of Anjou could not fail to exercise on learning of the events of that unfortunate day, known in history as the Sicilian Vespers, offered the crown to Peter III, King of Aragon, who accepted it. Philip III crossed the Pyrenees and seized the city of Girona. The Treaty of Tarascon, signed in 1291, and that of Anagni, concluded in 1295, ended this dispute. The navy had taken part in this war. She had fought, on the coasts of Sicily and Spain, with more courage than success, against brave and experienced adversaries, more accustomed than we ourselves were to the maneuvering of galleys, and having at their head skilled leaders, among whom we must mention the Aragonese admiral, Roger de Loria. The war between France and England was brought about by incidents that it is useful to report, because they give an idea of the maritime customs of that time.[17]

17

Norman and English sailors, when they met in the commercial ports, engaged in brawls that often degenerated into bloody fights. Following a quarrel in the port of Bayonne between an Englishman and a Norman, the latter was killed. The English claimed that the Norman's death was the result of an accident; he had fallen in which he had unintentionally mortally wounded himself with a dagger he was holding. The Normans, convinced that their comrade had been murdered, swore to avenge him. The Norman ships attacked the English vessels they encountered along their route and sank them after plundering them. The English immediately resorted to reprisals. Efforts made on both sides of the strait to restore harmony between the sailors of the two nations came to no avail. The Irish and the Dutch came to join the English, while the Picards, the Flemings, and even the Genoese sided with the Normans. Although the kings of France and England were at peace, the two nations waged bitter war at sea. The English towns, known as the "five ports," armed for war, without the king's authorization, a large number of vessels which put to sea with the avowed mission of hunting down the French ships. The navy of the "five ports" seized, near Saint-Mathieu, a merchant fleet numbering, according to historians, two hundred vessels; these were pillaged, sunk, and the crews massacred. Emboldened by impunity, the English made several landings near La Rochelle; they ravaged the country and killed inhabitants. Finally, it was learned in Paris that a naval force, in the service of the King of England, had appeared at the mouth of the Seine where it had destroyed merchant ships.[18]

18

Commercial navigation on our coasts had become impossible; complaints against the King of England resounded from all sides.

Philip IV ordered Edward to appear in person before the court of peers to account for his conduct. When Edward refused to submit to his overlord's orders, Philip IV seized Guyenne. An English fleet immediately arrived on our coasts; after setting fire to the towns and villages of the Île de Ré, it ravaged the region bordering the Gironde. While King Edward II waged war on our territory, a French fleet, commanded by Mathieu de Montmorency and Jean d'Harcourt, raided England and set fire to Dover. Since neither France nor England desired a continuation of the war, peace was easily concluded. Under the reigns of Louis X, John I, and Philip V, the navy played no role. Philip V was preparing for a new crusade when he died in 1322. Charles IV was preparing to carry out his predecessor's plan when the King of England declared war on him. Charles IV defeated the English in Guyenne and captured the Agenais. The two sovereigns concluded a peace treaty in 1328.

II

Philip of Valois, informed that the King of England was harboring hostile plans against France, smuggled ships from the Mediterranean into the Atlantic Ocean, and took into his pay Spanish ships and forty Italian galleys commanded by Aitone Doria and the Ligurian corsair Barbavera. [19]

19

These vessels, along with the Norman, Breton, and Picard ships that could be gathered, were placed under the command of Quiéret, Admiral of France, and Béhuchet, King's Treasurer. Edward III was waiting for a favorable opportunity to uphold, by force of arms, the rights he claimed to have to the French crown. After concluding a treaty of alliance with the communes of Flanders and obtaining a promise of assistance from Germany, he declared war on Philip of Valois. As soon as this news was known, Quiéret, Béhuchet, and Barbavera, who were, in Froissart's words, "charged with guarding the straits and passages between France and England," set out. Arriving unexpectedly off Southampton, they captured the town and returned to Dieppe, carrying off considerable booty. The French continued to trouble the English coast, on which they made several raids. A large number of ships, including the two largest vessels in the English navy, the *Saint-Christophe* and the *Saint-Édouard*, were captured.

On June 22, 1340, the King of England left the Thames, heading for Flanders with three hundred ships, to come to the aid of his ally, the Count of Hainaut. At daybreak on the 24th, the English became aware of the French fleet; this one, strong, it is said, with four hundred ships, was anchored in a narrow cove, between the fort of the Sluis and Blankenberg. Edward III immediately made arrangements to attack us: he arranged his army in two lines, the first comprising the strongest ships; in each line, on two ships, there was one mounted by archers and the other by men-at-arms; the crossbowmen were placed on the wings.[20]

20

The English were running east when they saw the French fleet ahead at daybreak; by maintaining this course, they must have had the sun in their eyes when they joined us, an unfavorable condition for giving battle. The enemy ships maneuvered to head upwind, which was from the south, and they waited until our fleet remained north before heading towards it. The English then made for our anchorage, with the sun to their right. The French fleet had made no move: it remained at anchor in a deep and narrow bay, a position that did not allow it to develop. The enemy was therefore free to attack wherever he deemed appropriate with superior forces. Barbavera, a skilled and experienced sailor, had in vain requested that the fleet set sail and head to meet the English. Quiéret and Béhuchet had rejected this wise advice given by a man of the trade. The Ligurian corsair, foreseeing the disastrous outcome of a battle fought in such conditions, put to sea with part of the Italian galleys. The action began at six o'clock in the morning, some say; at eight o'clock, others say. The *Christophe*, one of the two large ships captured from the English, was at the head of our ships, having on board a large troop of Genoese archers: it was surrounded and taken. The English, advancing into the bay, successively attacked our ships, maintaining, in these particular engagements, the advantage of numbers. The fighting was fierce when a reinforcement of Flemish ships, joining the English, decided the victory in favor of the latter. The battle ended around three o'clock in the afternoon.[21]

21

The losses in both armies were considerable, but especially on the French side. The ships on which Quiéret and Béhuchet were boarding had been captured, and they were taken prisoner. The English committed an act that constituted a true return to barbarism: Quiéret was killed in cold blood, and Béhuchet was hanged from the mast of his own ship. Edward III, some historians say, wanted to punish Quiéret and Béhuchet for the harm that the expeditions under their command had caused to the coasts of his kingdom; others claim that the King of England, by condemning Béhuchet to an ignominious death, intended to insult the King of France. This explanation, as far as Philip of Valois's treasurer was concerned, could only make Edward III's conduct more odious. The king's treasurer, Béhuchet, who had presided over the arming of the fleet, was accused by his contemporaries of having made the recruitment of crews a question of money: the choice of personnel was said to have been affected by his excessive desire to reduce expenditure. We read, in fact, in the Chronicles of Flanders: "He (Béhuchet) never wanted to tolerate a gentleman or a good sergeant, because it seemed to him that they wanted too high wages, and, to get a good price, took poor fishmongers and poor mariners, and such people made up his army." The accusations against the crown treasurer were perhaps deserved, but the real culprit was Philip III, who had entrusted a mission of this importance to a man incapable of fulfilling it. Béhuchet, say the great chroniclers of France, "was more capable of meddling in accounts than of waging war at sea." Thus, the personnel, very brave since they had fought fiercely, were not up to their task.[22]

22

To this cause of inferiority, which alone would suffice to explain our defeat, we must add the error committed by Quiéret and Béhuchet in remaining at anchor in a position that allowed the enemy to defeat the French fleet in detail.

In 1342, the Count of Blois and Count Jean de Montfort were disputing Brittany: Edward sided with the former and Philip of Valois with Charles of Blois. The Countess of Montfort, who had taken the place of her husband, who had fallen into the hands of Charles of Blois's supporters, was blockaded in Hennebont when the arrival of an English fleet freed her. She went to London to seek relief, which King Edward III hastened to grant. Forty-six ships had just left England, bringing the Countess of Montfort back to Brittany, when, off the island of Guernsey, the French were sighted. It was Louis of Spain, Admiral of France, who was keeping watch with thirty-two ships; he had, under his command, Charles Gemini and Aitone Doria, the former commanding the French and the latter the Genoese. The action began immediately, and on both sides, there was fierce fighting. The Countess of Montfort, who was on board an English ship, "was worth a man," says Froissard, "for she had the heart of a lion and a sharp sword with which she fought proudly." Night brought the engagement to an end: four ships fell into our hands. The French and English intended to resume the fight the next day, but a gale dispersed both fleets. The intervention of the Pope, Clement VI, led to the conclusion of the Truce of Malestroit in 1344. Two years later, Edward III, who had completed his arrangements for a landing in France, denounced it.[23]

23

Having left England with a thousand ships, Edward went to La Hougue, where he landed his army without encountering any more resistance than he had encountered crossing the Channel. After capturing the main towns of Normandy and approaching Paris, he was retreating before Philip of Valois when, arriving at the village of Crécy, still closely pressed by our army, he found himself obliged to fight. It is known that the French nobility, despite the fatigue of a long march in pouring rain and mud, threw themselves against the enemy, fearing they would escape. No military preparations had been made; it seemed the French army was leaderless. Greeted by a hail of missiles as it entered the English lines in disorder, our cavalry was completely routed. The king, who had fought well, if he had commanded badly, was able to leave the battlefield escorted by a few horsemen. Edward III, regaining his freedom of movement through this unexpected victory, came to lay siege to Calais. The capture of this city was ardently desired, not only by Edward III, but by all his people, so great was the fear that the sailors of Calais inspired in the commerce of England. Seven hundred and forty ships were cruising offshore in order to prevent any communication between the city and the sea. Of the ships making up this fleet, only twenty-five belonged to the king; the others had been lent to him by the city of London and the principal commercial cities of the kingdom. An attempt to unblock Calais, an attempt made with insufficient naval force, failed. After a siege of eleven months, sustained with the rarest intrepidity, Calais, having run out of provisions, capitulated. This event evokes the memory of the devotion of Eustace of Saint-Pierre and his companions. A new truce concluded in 1347 between Philip VI and Edward III halted the course of hostilities on land and sea.[24]

24

In 1356, during the reign of John the Good, who ascended the throne in 1350, war broke out again between France and England. The Black Prince, son of Edward III, won the Battle of Poitiers, in which the King of France was taken prisoner. John the Good, taken to London, remained in captivity until the Treaty of Brétigny, signed in 1360. France paid three million gold écus as the king's ransom, and was forced to renounce all suzerainty over Guyenne, Ponthieu, Guines, and Calais. The first years of Charles V's reign saw the end of the War of the Breton Succession. The Treaty of Guérande, concluded in 1365, secured the possession of this province to Jean de Montfort under the suzerainty of the King of France. In 1372, Edward III, against whom Charles V had been fighting for three years, sent a fleet commanded by the Earl of Pembroke to the aid of La Rochelle. Charles V, who did not have sufficient maritime resources to blockade this city from the sea, had contacted Henry, King of Castile, who had placed at his disposal, against the payment of a fixed sum, fifty-three ships, forty of large dimensions and thirteen light barques, placed under the command of Admiral Ambrosio Boccanegra. The latter was cruising off La Rochelle when the English fleet appeared. Boccanegra set sail, rose to windward and let the enemy bear, with whom he engaged in a very lively fight. The English, completely beaten, fled, leaving most of their ships in our hands. In 1377, Edward III put to sea with considerable forces to bring relief to the city of La Rochelle, which the admiral of Castile, Hugh Rufus, held tightly blockaded.[25]

25

Assailed by constant gales, Edward's fleet was unable to fulfill its mission.

France, devastated and dismembered under Philip of Valois and John the Good, recovered during the reign of Charles V. At the king's death in 1380, the English only had the cities of Calais, Cherbourg, Brest, Bordeaux, and Bayonne left. In mentioning these great achievements, mainly due to the king's wise and skillful leadership, we cannot forget the warriors Du Guesclin, Olivier de Clisson, and Boucicaut, who rebuilt our armies and recaptured France from the English. Charles VI was unable to preserve for France the conquests made by his father. In 1386, the new king assembled a large fleet at Sluys, where extensive preparations were being made to raid England, but the favorable moment for going to sea was allowed to pass, and this immense armament had no other result than to aggravate the already very burdened situation of our finances. The following year, the English, cruising on our coasts under the orders of the Earl of Arundel, encountered a Flemish fleet commanded by Jean de Buch, admiral of our ally the Duke of Burgundy. The battle began and lasted until nightfall; it resumed the next day, off Sluys. The ship on which Jean de Buch was sailing having been captured, disorder arose among the Flemish ships, which were almost all taken or sunk. The Earl of Arundel, wishing to complete his victory, transformed some of the ships that had fallen into his hands into fireships, and launched them against the Flemish ships that were in the port of Sluys. This attempt was unsuccessful. The ship that Jean de Buch was riding carried three cannons, as the following passage from Froissart shows: "And in the main vessel were three cannons that threw such large lead bolts that, where they landed, they pierced everything and caused great damage."[26]

26

In 1387, preparations were made for a landing in England; two fleets were armed, one at Tréguier and the other at Harfleur, but the first was not ready in time, so the landing project was abandoned. The ships assembled at Harfleur defeated the English Admiral Spemer and captured six ships.

While the King of England, Henry IV, who had ascended the throne through usurpation, defended himself against the rebellious barons, France was torn apart by the struggles of the princes of the royal family. Although hostilities were suspended, Henry IV and Charles VI having concluded a truce, the feelings of animosity existing between the sailors of the two nations had not disappeared. The English committed continual depredations at sea; they cruised close to our coasts and captured the ships they encountered. At the beginning of the year 1403, the Lord of Penhoët, Admiral of Brittany, having gathered thirty vessels carrying, besides the crews, twelve hundred men-at-arms, put to sea in search of the English. At the beginning of the year 1403, says Monstrelet, "the admiral of Brittany, the lord of Penhoët, the lord of Châtel, the lord of Bois and several other knights and squires of Brittany, up to the number of twelve hundred men-at-arms, assembled at Morlans, then entered in thirty ships, at a port called Châtel-Pol, against the English who were at sea in great multitude, spying on the merchants as plunderers and sea scum. So that, on Wednesday, following, these English swimming (sailing) in front of a port called Saint-Mathieu, the Bretons went after them, and pursued them until the next day, at sunrise, when they stopped together in battle which lasted until three o'clock.[27]

27

Finally, the Bretons won the victory, and captured two thousand combatants from the English, with forty sailing ships and a large carrack." Henry V, who became King of England in 1413, decided to take advantage of the unfortunate situation in which France found itself, with a king suffering from madness and princes of the blood fighting for power, weapons in hand. He sent word to Paris that he demanded the immediate surrender of Normandy and the other provinces taken by Philip Augustus from John Lackland. The Court of France having formally refused the King of England's demands, the latter, whose military preparations were complete, crossed the sea and laid siege to Harfleur. When the city, after a long resistance, found itself obliged to surrender, the besiegers were very weakened by fatigue and illness. Henry V, without taking this situation into account, undertook the conquest of Normandy, but, after several failures, he had to decide to retreat. The English were heading towards Calais, where reinforcements were waiting for them, when they were joined by the Constable d'Albret, sent in pursuit. The French nobility, without giving the army commander time to make arrangements for battle, threw themselves upon the enemy; as at Crécy and Poitiers, defeat was the result of this very brilliant attack, but made with the most complete disregard for the rules of war. The victory at Agincourt delivered our country to England. By the Treaty of Troyes, concluded in 1420, Henry V was declared regent and heir to the crown of France, on the sole condition of marrying Catherine, daughter of Charles VI. France, dismembered under Philip of Valois and John the Good, had been reconstituted by the wise and skillful Charles V; at the death of Charles VI, a large part of the kingdom was in the hands of the English.[28]

28

The early years of Charles VII's reign did not seem to bode well for France; we lost the battles of Crevant-sur-Yonne in 1422, Verneuil in 1423, and Rouvray in 1429. But Joan of Arc appeared; she lifted the siege of Orléans, defeated the English at Patay, and led the king to Reims. The heroic Lorraine, captured at the siege of Compiègne, was sold to the English; they brought her before a tribunal whose sentence was dictated by the leaders of their army; Joan was condemned to be burned at the stake. The French, driven by the desire to avenge the great patriot, continued their course of success. In 1437, Charles VII entered Paris. After losing the battles of Formigny in 1450 and Castillon in 1453, the English no longer possessed anything in France but the town of Calais. Edward IV intended to claim by force of arms the crown of France, to which he claimed to have a right, but England, torn by internal struggles, had seen its power at sea diminish. The king was unable to assemble the naval forces necessary to effect a landing on our soil, when the Duke of Burgundy placed at his disposal a flotilla of five hundred Dutch ships. Louis XI, entirely absorbed in the struggle he was waging against the great vassals, had neglected the navy. The King of England was able to cross the Channel without encountering a fleet disputing his passage. Edward IV, not having found in France the support he was counting on, decided to negotiate; the Treaty of Picquigny, concluded in 1475, put an end to the dispute existing between the two kingdoms. Before the signing of the peace treaty, Admiral Coulon had seized a Dutch and Flemish fleet, composed of eighty ships.[29]

29

Two events, closely linked to the greatness of France and the development of its navy, occurred, one at the end of the reign of Louis XI and the other at the accession to the throne of Charles VIII. Provence was bequeathed to Louis XI; on the other hand, Charles VIII, through his marriage to Anne of Brittany, reunited this province with France. This territorial extension completed our maritime border in the Mediterranean and the Ocean.

Instead of continuing, on the borders, the work of the territorial unity of France, Charles VIII asserted his rights to the Kingdom of Naples as heir, through Louis XI, to Charles of Anjou, whose family had been dispossessed by the House of Aragon. While the King of France was crossing Italy at the head of an army, the Duke of Orleans was heading, with a large number of armed ships in the ports of the South, for the city of Naples. Informed that a fleet, commanded by Frederick of Aragon, had seized Rapallo, a port located in the Gulf of Genoa, the Duke of Orleans set out to find it. Having learned that it had withdrawn to Livorno, he set sail for Rapallo, which he recaptured from the Neapolitans. Father Daniel, in his history of the French Militia, says that the fleet of the Duke of Orleans included "a galley armed with large cannons by means of which this prince defeated the enemy at Rapallo, a few leagues from Genoa."[30]

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BOOK II

Development of the Navy. - Influence of the Crusades. - Progress in Construction. - Methods of Combat. - Maritime Trade. - The Discoveries. - Christopher Columbus. - Vasco da Gama. - The Navy under the Reign of Louis XII. - Hervé de Portzmoguer. - Pregent de Bidoux. - Francis I Turns His Attention to the Navy. - André Doria Joins the French Forces. - The Spanish Are Defeated Before Marseille and in the Gulf of Naples. - Defection of Doria. - Alliance with Turkey. - The Ottoman Fleet Acts in Concert with Our Naval Forces. - Capture of Nice. - Engagement off the Isle of Wight. - Léon Strozzi Defeats the English Before Boulogne.

I

Before going any further, we will summarize the role played by the navy from the founding of the French monarchy until the end of the 15th century. Its action, nil under the kings of the first race, increased under Charlemagne. During the reign of the great emperor, flotillas anchored at the mouths of our great rivers stood ready to embark the coastal garrisons and to go to meet the pirates who threatened our shores. Charlemagne died, the maritime power he had created disappeared, and everything at sea that lived by brigandage, Swedes, Norwegians, Danes and Irish in the north, and Saracens in the south, rushed to our coasts. Boats, laden with men, sail up our rivers, ravage the country, pillage the towns and disperse or massacre the inhabitants.[31]

31

This is the result of the abandonment of maritime organization, the work of Charlemagne. Under Louis VI, wars began between France and England that would last until the reign of Charles VII. During this period, which spanned no less than three and a half centuries, the role played by the navy is easily understood. England fought to retain Normandy, Guyenne, Poitou, and Saintonge, magnificent provinces that constituted, for her, not only a territorial expansion and a new source of wealth, but also gave her the opportunity to constantly have a hand in our affairs. France fought to recover the maritime borders that her security and commercial prosperity demanded. The dispute between the two peoples is resolved on the battlefield, but the action of the navy constantly modifies the conditions of the struggle. While Brittany is independent and the provinces for which we are fighting belong to the English, the small extent of coastline that we possess in the Channel and in the Ocean does not allow us to act, at sea, with the necessary vigor. Our adversaries bring troops, food and equipment to the continent without encountering any resistance. The unfortunate outcome of the Battle of Sluys, fought under Philip of Valois on June 24, 1340, prepares the way for the defeat of Crécy, which occurred on August 26, 1346; the capture of Calais by Edward III on 3 August of the following year resulted in the disaster at Poitiers in 1356. The loss of the battles of Crécy and Poitiers can be explained by military errors, but it was maritime superiority that gave the King of England the opportunity to land a large army on our soil.[32]

32

A thousand ships, assigned to this service, were able to sail in complete safety. The enemy strives to maintain the maritime preponderance, the full value of which he understands. Two successive expeditions of fifteen to sixteen hundred ships, carried out by Henry V, and the defeat of our fleet before Harfleur, precede the disastrous day of Agincourt.

The navy, at the end of the 15th century, had means of action whose importance grew every day. We are far from the boats in which the pirates of the North approached our shores, and the flotillas that Charlemagne opposed to them. High-sided ships, so called because of their elevation above the water, replaced the boats of yesteryear. The single mast of the old barques was succeeded by two, three and four masts. It was no longer the oar, but the sail which played the principal role on the ships, galleons, caravels, names under which the new ships were designated. These were also called round vessels, in contrast to the galleys which were long vessels. The dimensions increased; nevertheless, small vessels remained in the majority. Therefore, one should not be surprised by the large quantity of vessels which, according to the chroniclers, comprised the fleets of this period. The seventeen hundred ships assembled by Philip Augustus at the mouth of the Seine included longboats and even simple barques. The galley had not disappeared from the Ocean, but it was no longer, on this sea, anything but an exception. In the Mediterranean, where it continues to play a predominant role, a new ship appears, the galleass. This is similar to the galley, but it has less slender shapes and it sails rather than rows.

The Crusades played an important role in the development of the navy and the progress of naval architecture.[33]

33

Navigation between the West and the East is expanding rapidly; on the other hand, new conditions are imposed on shipbuilders. Men, horses, food, munitions, and considerable equipment must be transported across the Mediterranean. Shipbuilders strive to meet these needs, and it must be recognized that they are not inferior to their task. Joinville, in the Life of Saint Louis, mentions a vessel that carried eight hundred men; special ships were being built to transport horses. The trading republics of Italy—Venice, Genoa, Pisa, and Amalfi—were, at first, the only ones to benefit from the great maritime movement inaugurated by the Crusades. Responsible for transporting armies and ensuring their subsistence, they saw their navies increase rapidly. This very increase led to rapid progress in construction, progress which later benefited all nations. The State does not have a navy; in certain circumstances, very rare, ships are built at the expense of the royal treasury. On the other hand, some of our kings, enlightened by the struggles we are fighting against England, Spain or the Italian princes, want to lay the foundations of a permanent maritime establishment, but these projects are barely beginning to be executed. In short, the attempts made to achieve the organization of a State navy do not lead to any serious results; in 1481, a galley navy was created, but this creation will remain, for a long time, more apparent than real.

When political or military necessities require the assembly of a naval force, an embargo is placed on merchant ships in all ports; some are bought or others are rented.[34]

34

A sum is given to the captains responsible for providing pay and maintenance for the personnel. Since the resources offered by France are often insufficient, because our maritime trade is not yet very developed, it is necessary to resort to foreign nations; they turn to the Scandinavian powers and the Hanseatic cities. In Spain, where the best sailors in Europe are to be found, there are ships that captains rent to the highest bidder; in Genoa and Venice, galleys, militias, sailors, archers, and soldiers can be obtained; the Doria put themselves, with real fleets, at the service of foreign princes. The method for engaging in action has not changed. The front line remains the battle formation; it is in this order that two opposing fleets sail towards each other. Each of them seeks the advantage of the wind, which allows the one that possesses it to attack its adversary with greater speed. Some ships have iron belts ending in a point and forming a sort of spur, giving them the possibility of sinking the ships they manage to approach from abeam. When the two fleets have come close enough, the archers and crossbowmen unleash a hail of arrows, and the ships, on which ballistae are installed, set them in motion. They board each other, the grappling hooks are thrown, and, when the ships are tied to each other, the action unfolds, as on land, sword in hand.

Maritime trade, during the Middle Ages, remains, as in ancient times, concentrated almost entirely in the Mediterranean. Time marches on and the organization of Western Europe makes rapid progress. The merchant navy, which has grown considerably, is seeking to expand its operations.[35]

35

The Danes visited the northern coasts of America in 982, and several centuries passed without history recording another discovery; sailors did not dare stray from the coast. Knowledge of the compass, the use of the astrolabe, introduced into the navy during the reign of John II, King of Portugal, and the application of astronomy to navigation opened up new horizons. A Portuguese, Gonzallo Vello, explored the Azores in 1448, and the Genoese Antoine Molli explored the Cape Verde Islands in 1449. Two Portuguese, John of Santarem and Peter Escovar, arrived on the coast of Guinea in 1471; One of their compatriots, Diego Cam, reached the Congo in 1484. Two years later, another Portuguese sailor, Dias, recognized the extreme tip of Africa, but, stopped by bad weather, he did not manage to cross it. In 1492, one of the greatest events in history took place, the discovery of America. The Portuguese, by extending the western coast of Africa in a southerly direction, did not only intend to recognize new countries, they wanted to find the way to the Indies. While they were looking for it on the eastern side, a Genoese sailor, gifted with a very profound scientific mind, glimpsed another route. Christopher Columbus had, early on, devoted himself to the study of the various problems which preoccupied sailors and astronomers at that time. After consulting scholars, searching archives, and questioning navigators, he was led to believe that a ship, leaving from an Atlantic port and crossing this sea in a westerly direction, was bound to arrive in the Indies. Christopher Columbus matured this idea for many years, and one day came when what was at first only a hypothesis took on, in his eyes, the character of reality.[36]

36

He then began to search for ways to demonstrate what he considered an incontestable truth. Cruel disappointments awaited him.

Christopher Columbus addressed himself, in turn, to Genoa, his homeland, to Venice, to Portugal; everywhere he was rejected and almost treated as mad. He wrote, but in vain, to the kings of France and England. After wasting many years of his life in vain attempts, he saw Spain welcome his plans; nevertheless, eight years passed before the time came to put them into execution. Finally, Ferdinand the Catholic and Queen Isabella decided to entrust him with three caravels, the *Santa Maria*, the *Pinta*, and the *Nina*. These ships had four masts, and, if we refer to the memories of that time, their sails were as follows: The four masts of the *Nina* carried lateen sails; it was the same on the *Pinta*, with the exception, however, of the forward mast, which had square sails; finally, on the *Santa-Maria*, the two forward masts had square sails, and the other two lateen sails. The Santa-Maria was decked, the *Pinta* and the *Nina* were not completely so. In any case, these caravels held the sea well, were easy to maneuver and could carry provisions for a long crossing.

Christopher Columbus, appointed Grand Admiral of the Ocean Sea, Viceroy and Governor of the islands and lands he would discover, left Palos, Andalusia, on August 3, 1492. He was on board the *Santa Maria*, Martin Alonzo Pinzon was in command of the *Pinta* and his brother, Vincent Yanez Pinzon, the *Nina*. The Spanish ships had been at sea for seventy days when land was sighted; it was Guanahani Island, one of the Lucayan Islands, which received the name San Salvador.[37]

37

After exploring the various islands forming the Lucayan Archipelago, the three ships set sail and landed on December 6th in Haiti, where the foundations of the first Spanish settlement in the New World were laid. On January 16th, 1493, Christopher Columbus set sail for Spain, where he was eager to bring news of the great event that had just taken place. On March 15th, after seven months and a few days of absence, he entered the port of Palos, greeted by the cheers of the inhabitants. On his way to the Court, which was then in Barcelona, he made a triumphant march across Spain. On September 17th, 1493, Christopher Columbus set sail again with seventeen ships; In this new voyage, he discovered the Lesser Antilles. The admiral undertook, in 1498, a third voyage during which he touched the American continent; finally, in 1502, in a fourth and final voyage, Christopher Columbus went as far as the Gulf of Darien. He had never ceased to believe that the lands explored, since the famous day when he had seen the land for the first time, were part of China.

Columbus, who had just acquired immortal glory, was to show, in his person, how far the ingratitude and injustice of men can go. We know how his third voyage ended, the one in which he touched the American continent. Christopher Columbus, who was not only Grand Admiral of the Ocean Sea, but Viceroy of the Indies and Governor of all the islands and lands he would discover, returned to Spain loaded with chains like a criminal; so had ordered Governor Bobadilla, sent to Haiti with sovereign powers. Justice was done to Christopher Columbus, since he made a fourth voyage, but he never forgot the unworthy treatment he had suffered and the unjust oblivion in which Spain had left his services.[38]

38

Overwhelmed by fatigue, sorrow, and infirmity, reduced to a state bordering on poverty, Christopher Columbus died in Valladolid on May 19, 1506; he wanted the chains he had worn placed in his coffin. When the discovery of the New World became known, bold sailors set out in Columbus's footsteps. The Florentine Americus Vespucio and the Spaniard Ojedo, leaving Cadiz in 1497, sailed along the coasts of Paria and the mainland as far as the Gulf of Mexico. They reached the American continent before Christopher Columbus, since he only reached this continent during his third voyage, which began in 1498. In 1497, two Venetians, in the service of England, John Cabot and his son, Sebastian, looking for the route to India by the north of the Atlantic, recognized the coast of Labrador, Hudson Bay, and later, heading south, Florida. Sebastian Cabot, having passed into the service of Spain, obtained command of four ships with which he went up the course of the Plata. In the year 1500, the Amazon River was recognized by the Spaniard Yanez Pinson. The Portuguese continued to think that the route to India should be sought by rounding the extreme tip of Africa, in the south. In April 1497, Vasco da Gama left Lisbon with three ships, and on December 6, more fortunate than Bartholomew Diaz, he rounded the formidable promontory which was given the name of Cape of Good Hope. Going up the eastern coast, the Portuguese flotilla put in at Zanzibar, then, taking its course across the immense gulf which separates Africa from India, it landed at Calicut, on the Malabar coast, thirteen months after its departure from Lisbon. Thus, two great events mark the end of the 15th century, the discovery of the New World and the passage to India, via the south of Africa.[39]

39

II

The Duke of Orléans, grandson of the duke assassinated by John the Fearless in 1407, ascended the throne under the name of Louis XII. The new king claimed the crown of Naples, as successor to Charles VIII, and Milan, as heir to his grandmother, Valentine Visconti. Louis XII conquered Milan and, with the help of Ferdinand the Catholic, seized the Kingdom of Naples. When the time came to divide the jointly acquired spoils, the allies could not agree, and they resorted to arms to settle the dispute. In 1501, Louis XII had sent a fleet under the command of Philip of Cleves of Ravenstein to the aid of the Venetians, whose possessions in the Mediterranean were under attack by the Ottomans. Following disagreements between the latter and the head of the Venetian naval forces, the bulk of the French fleet had returned to Naples; Prégent de Bidoux, general of the galleys of France, had remained off the island of Mételin with four galleys. In 1502, the Republic of Venice having sided with Ferdinand the Catholic, a Spanish fleet attempted to surround the French galleys, but Prégent de Bidoux, thwarting the enemy's plans through skillful maneuvering, managed to reach the port of Otranto. Having learned that the Venetians were preparing to attack him with forces which his four galleys could not resist, he set fire to them and, putting himself at the head of his crews, he joined the French troops who were fighting in Italy.[40]

40

The following year, Pregent de Bidoux resupplied Gaeta in view of a Spanish fleet that did not dare oppose this operation. In the struggle for possession of the Kingdom of Naples, our troops, after some successes early in the campaign, were forced to evacuate southern Italy. The Treaty of Blois, concluded in 1505, ended the war.

Pope Julius II, Maximilian of Austria, Henry VIII, Ferdinand the Catholic, the Venetians and the Swiss having formed a league whose aim was to drive the French out of Italy, hostilities began on land and sea in 1511. While the fighting was going on in Italy, Henry VIII was making preparations for a descent on our coasts. On 10 August 1512, a Franco-Breton fleet under the command of Jean Thénouénel encountered, off Cape Saint-Mathieu, the naval forces commanded by Admiral Howard; the latter had left England with instructions to enter Brest harbor by force and seize the town and port. The enemy was superior to us in numbers. The two armies having soon joined, a melee took place in which each captain acted according to the circumstances, and according to the inspirations of his courage. There was, in the French fleet, a very remarkable building for this period; it was *Marie la Cordelière*, built, at Morlaix, by order of Anne of Brittany. This ship, placed under the command of Hervé de Portzmoguer, had a covered battery, and was armed with sixty pieces of cannon. The English had in the ranks of their army a building of roughly similar dimensions, the *Régente*, captained by Thomas Kervenet.[41]

41

A fire broke out aboard the *Cordelière* while she was vigorously defending herself against several enemy ships, including the *Régente*. Captain Portzmoguer, desperate to save his ship, boarded the *Régente*. The fire spread to the English ship; when it was unable to free itself, both ships quickly consumed each other and disappeared, dragging all the sailors and soldiers aboard them into the abyss. The details of this battle are little known, and it would be difficult to say which of the two fleets won the victory. However, the enemy found itself unable to carry out its plans for the city and port of Brest.

The battle had been fought without observing any formal orders. There is reason to believe that the only warships featured in the battle of August 10, 1512, were the ship *Marie la Cordelière*, and, on the English side, the *Régente*. The other vessels in both armies had been borrowed from the merchant navy. The French crews were, for the most part, composed of soldiers, and Hervé de Portzmoguer must have been not a sailor but a military leader, probably the lord of a town near Brest.

The following year, Prégent de Bidoux crossed from the Mediterranean into the Ocean with four galleys; on April 22, 1513, encountering the English fleet on the coast of Brittany, he crossed it and reached, via Le Four, a small cove near Le Conquet. He immediately began work on the construction of batteries to protect his anchorage. Admiral Howard, after having reconnoitered the position of the French ships, decided to attack them. Since most of the English ships could not, due to their draft, take part in this operation, he formed a division comprising two galleys, some light vessels and longboats, with which he headed for our anchorage on April 25.[42]

42

The English captains had orders to line up alongside the French ships. Admiral Howard, setting the example, boarded the galley that Prégent was aboard; he was one of the first to jump onto the galley's forecastle, but at that moment, the cable connecting the two ships broke, and the English admiral found himself on the French galley, with about twenty of his men, as his ship moved away. Losing all hope of being rescued, he threw himself into the sea, trying to reach one of his boats, but he was unable to do so and drowned. The English division, after suffering serious losses, returned to the open sea. - In 1515, Prégent, along with Admiral Lartigues, made several expeditions to the English coast. It can be seen that the navy played a very honorable role under the reign of Louis XII. Among those who added a glorious page to its history, we must mention Portzmoguer and Prégent de Bidoux, whose names must not be forgotten.

François d'Angoulême, cousin of Louis XII, ascended the throne in 1515 under the name of François I. The new king won the Battle of Marignano that same year, which made him master of Milan. Peace followed this victory. Treaties were concluded with the Pope, the Swiss, and Charles of Austria, who had just succeeded his grandfather, Ferdinand the Catholic, in Spain. Francis I ceded his rights over the Kingdom of Naples to Spain, in exchange for the promise that the Kingdom of Navarre would be returned to the House of Albret. Francis I took charge of the navy from the beginning of his reign. It was at Harfleur, in the English Channel, that the main armaments were built when it was necessary to assemble a war fleet. However, access to this port was made more difficult every day, first by the withdrawal of the sea, then by the ever-increasing dimensions of the new buildings.[43]

43

Le Havre was designated to replace Harfleur; the necessary work to establish an arsenal in this new port was immediately undertaken.

The peace was short-lived. The rivalry between Francis I and Charles of Austria, King of Spain, to whom the Diet of Frankfurt had given the imperial crown, under the name of Charles V or Charles V, rekindled the war. Hostilities began in 1521. The French, defeated at Bicoque, evacuated Milan. The Constable of Bourbon, angered by the Queen Mother who pursued him with unjust hatred, betrayed his country. After signing a treaty with Henry VIII and Charles V stipulating the dismemberment of the French monarchy, he joined the Spanish army in Italy. The naval forces of England and Spain, united in the English Channel, carried out several landings on our shores. Morlaix, a wealthy and commercial town, surprised while lacking troops, was given over to pillage. The French navy, due to its inferiority, posed no obstacle to the enemy's operations; in the Mediterranean, our naval forces consisted of a few galleys. Reduced to our own resources, we were unable to undertake anything. Fortunately, the famous André Doria, hoping that our alliance would ensure the independence of the Republic of Genoa, passed, with his galleys, into our service; he was appointed by François I as general of the galleys of France.

The setbacks suffered by the army of Italy, defeated in 1524 at Rebecco and Romagnano, uncovered our frontier. The Constable of Bourbon and the Marquis of Pescaira laid siege to Marseille. This city was blockaded, on the sea side, by the Spanish admiral Moncade.[44]

44

Vice-Admiral Marquis de la Fayette and André Doria defeated the Spanish fleet; three enemy galleys fell into our hands, and the Prince of Orange, who was aboard one of them, was taken prisoner. Admiral Moncade took refuge in Nice; shortly after, fearing the results of a new attack, he set fire to his ships. Marseille was able to receive relief by sea, which allowed it to prolong its resistance. The approach of an army led by Francis I lifted the siege; the enemy withdrew with such haste that it abandoned its baggage and cannons. Francis I quickly recaptured Milan, but was defeated and taken prisoner at the Battle of Pavia, fought against the advice of his army's most experienced commanders. These had in vain requested that the king wait, before attacking the Spanish troops, for the arrival of reinforcements which were about to join him. The Treaty of Madrid, concluded in 1526, ended the war on conditions humiliating for France. Pope Clement VII de Medici, the kings of France and England and the Italian princes joined forces against Charles V whose power, growing every day, constituted a danger for the independence of Europe. The confederate ships defeated, near Genoa, the fleet of Charles V. The French army having laid siege to Naples, Doria established himself in cruise in the bay with the galleys of Genoa and some French ships. Bad weather forced him to seek refuge in Salerno. The Spaniards, hoping to surprise him, hastily assembled a flotilla; This one, which was superior, in terms of numbers, to the forces at Doria's disposal, had, moreover, the advantage of being mounted by a personnel of fighters, taken, for this occasion, from among the elite soldiers of the garrison of Naples.[45]

45

The viceroy was, in person, aboard one of the ships in the flotilla; however, he had left the maritime direction of the expedition to an officer belonging to the galley corps. With the allies on their guard, the Spanish could not have the benefit of surprise. When the enemy was signaled, Doria sent out two galleys, which rowed out to sea, as if eager to escape an unequal battle by a rapid escape. Some of the Spanish galleys set out in pursuit; this was the moment the allies had been waiting for. The enemy having imprudently divided his forces, Doria found himself with the advantage of numbers; quickly approaching the ships in front of him, he attacked them with great vigor. The Spanish ships, sent in pursuit of the two Genoese galleys, gave up the chase and headed for the battlefield, closely followed by the same galleys. The battle became general; it had disastrous consequences for the Spanish. Only two ships returned to Naples; the others were captured or sunk. The viceroy died of wounds he had received during the battle.

Shortly after this event, Doria ceased to display his usual activity; entering into negotiations with the emperor's agents, he was preparing his defection. The outcome of these negotiations was the conclusion of a treaty stipulating the restoration of Genoa's freedom; on the other hand, the republic undertook to place its fleet at the service of Charles V. On September 12, 1528, Doria presented himself before Genoa with all his forces. The few French galleys that were in the port could not, especially in the face of the hostility of the population, offer any resistance; they moved away without being disturbed.[46]

46

By depriving us of the support of the Republic's naval forces, Doria deprived us of the possibility of acting in the Mediterranean. Spain's maritime communications with Italy were now assured; this was the route that Charles V and his troops were obliged to take to reach not only Italy, but also Germany and Flanders. The Treaty of Cambrai, concluded in 1529, ended the war; Francis I retained Burgundy, but abandoned Italy to the Emperor. Master of Spain, Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands, Charles V surrounded France on all sides. The struggle against the Empire was imperative; it was not only a question of maintaining the European balance, it was the very existence of France that was in question. After the loss of the Battle of Pavia followed by the captivity of Francis I, the regent, Louise of Savoy, had entered into negotiations with Turkey. There was no antagonism between France and the Ottoman Empire; on the contrary, we had common interests with this power. Turkey threatened Austria with its armies, and its fleet dominated the Mediterranean. It was therefore wise, from a purely political point of view, to seek common ground with Turkey; on the other hand, opinion in Europe was resolutely opposed to any idea of an alliance between a Christian people and a Muslim power. The regent, adopting the views of Chancellor Duprat, did not fear to offend, on this point, general feeling. A diplomatic agent, sent to Constantinople in 1525, had been favorably received by the Sultan. The negotiations, stopped by the conclusion of the Treaty of Madrid in 1526, were resumed and they concluded in 1536, the year which saw the outbreak of the third war between Francis I and Charles V.[47]

47

The latter, returning from the Tunis expedition, invaded Provence and laid siege to Marseille.

The approach of Francis I, arriving in great haste to defend the south, led to the retreat of the Imperials. Doria, with his galleys, had brought supplies to Charles V's army; he took the siege equipment and landed it in the port of Genoa. The presence on the Italian coast of the Turkish fleet, commanded by the famous Barbarossa, and the revolt of the people of Ghent persuaded Charles V to conclude a three-month truce, then the Treaty of Nice, which was to last ten years.

Four years passed, and France found itself once again at war with the Empire. Charles V was clever enough to induce Henry VIII to declare himself against us. The alliance with Turkey gave us an indisputable superiority over the naval forces that Charles V could oppose to us in the Mediterranean. In April of 1543, Barbarossa put to sea with one hundred and fifty ships, and in the middle of July, he effected his junction, in the Gulf of Marseilles, with the French galleys placed under the command of the Count of Enghien, Lieutenant-General of the Seas of the Levant. The combined fleet went to the Bay of Villefranche, disembarked troops, part of the crews and the siege was laid before this city; the allies took possession of it, but on the approach of the enemy, who arrived with considerable forces, they re-embarked. It was truly regrettable that such a large armament had led to such a result. Barbarossa spent the winter in the harbor of Toulon; divisions of his army, sent to sea, made some incursions on the coasts of Spain. The brilliant victory of Cerisoles, won in 1544 by the Duke of Enghien, was followed by prompt reverses; Henry VIII took the city of Boulogne; Charles V entered Champagne and reached Meaux, pushing the Dauphin's army before him.[48]

48

The situation in France had become very critical when, fortunately, disagreements arose between the Emperor and the King of England; on the other hand, there was great unrest among the Lutheran princes, and an uprising on their part was imminent. Deciding, upon learning this news, to cross into Germany, Charles V thought it prudent to make peace with France. The Treaty of Crespy was signed in 1544.

We remained at war with England. Francis I formed the project of recapturing Boulogne, but, to succeed in this enterprise, it was necessary to have, at sea, a sufficient force to prevent the enemy from sending relief to the besieged city. We have seen that Prégent de Bidoux had crossed, in 1513, from the Mediterranean into the Ocean, with four galleys. The memory of this operation, which had been entirely successful, decided the king, not only to renew this attempt, but to make it on a larger scale. Captain Escalin, better known under the name of Polain and, later, under that of Baron de la Garde, received the order to take twenty-five galleys in the ports of the South and to lead them into the Channel. A large fleet was armed at Le Havre and the king came, in his person, to this port to supervise and hasten the preparations for the expedition. An unfortunate event occurred shortly before the departure of the fleet. The finest ship in the army, weighing five hundred tons, others say eight hundred, armed with one hundred bronze artillery pieces, burned during a party given on board by François I. Our fleet, placed under the command of Admiral d'Annebaut, appeared on July 18, 1544, off the Isle of Wight.[49]

49

The English were anchored behind the shoals and rocks bordering the coast. The French galleys, having made for the enemy to reconnoiter, approached them, and an artillery battle ensued. After a cannonade lasting several hours, the English reached the shore and dropped anchor under the cannons of the forts. The next day, at daybreak, it was calm. The galleys weighed anchor and headed toward the enemy; they had orders to bombard them while avoiding full-bore engagement. The *Mary Rose*, 600 tons, one of the largest ships in the English army, was sunk, and the *Grand Henry* was about to suffer the same fate when a fresh breeze from the land blew up. The English immediately set sail and made for the galleys under full sail; the latter, understanding the danger that threatened them, rowed towards the army. Having no retreating guns, they were unable to defend themselves. Some English ships, making good progress, overtook our vessels and caused them a great deal of damage with their artillery. The galleys, fearing to be boarded and sunk during their course of evolution, did not dare to run towards the enemy. However, Leon Strozzi, confident in the qualities of the galley he commanded, suddenly came all at once and set course towards the most advanced English ships; these veered and rallied the bulk of their army. Noticing that Admiral Annebaut was maneuvering to come to the aid of the galleys, the English headed for land and resumed their first position. Admiral Annebaut made a landing at the Isle of Wight; judging that the English fleet occupied too strong a position to be attacked with any chance of success, he headed for the Pas-de-Calais. After a new engagement, of little importance, with the English, our ships entered Le Havre.[50]

50

Peace was signed in 1547. Henry II continued the struggle that Francis I had been waging against the House of Austria; renouncing war in Italy, he set himself the goal of pushing back France's borders towards the Rhine.

The Florentine Leo Strozzi, Prior of Capua, belonging to the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, was appointed General of the Galleys of France in 1547, replacing the Baron de la Garde, who had fallen into disgrace. Leaving Marseille with ten galleys, the new general captured eleven Flemish hourcae bound for Barcelona and one Spanish galley. He crossed from the Mediterranean into the Ocean and reached the coast of Scotland to support the widow of James V, the regent Mary of Lorraine, against the English. In 1548, he went to Leith where he embarked Mary Stuart, whose hand was destined for the Dauphin, and he led her to Brest, deceiving the English fleet which was waiting for our ships between Calais and Dover. The following year, the king having laid siege to Boulogne, Leon Strozzi received the order to prevent relief from entering the place by sea. "Leon Strozzi," says Father Fournier, "having encountered the English army, fought it with such courage and success that he dispersed it, after having sunk a good number of the enemy vessels, captured some and chased the others as far as the Isle of Wight. On this occasion, twelve well-equipped and armed galleys served greatly in the victory, the combat having taken place during a bouace [squall?] which gave them a marvelous advantage, especially since they turned easily when rowing, and the enemy ships were exposed to the fury of their cannon which beat at water level. Peace with England was signed before the capture of the city; by virtue of one of the clauses of the treaty, Boulogne returned to our possession.[51]

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BOOK III

War with the Empire. - The Ottoman fleet captures seven Genoese galleys. - Expedition to Corsica. - Battle between Dieppe and Flemish ships. - Capture of Calais by the Duke of Guise. - English landing at Le Conquet. - The Baron de la Garde before La Rochelle. - Battle near the Azores. - Battle of Lepanto. - Its consequences. - War between England and Spain. - English expedition to Cadiz. - Role of the navy in the 16th century. - Maritime movement in the 16th century. - The discoveries. - The need for an international code emerges. - Principle of freedom of the seas. - Grosius. - Selden.

I

Henry II having undertaken to assist the German Reformers, on condition that they would help him "to seize the imperial cities not of Germanic language, such as Cambrai, Metz, Toul, Verdun and others of the like," war broke out between France and the Empire. The inferiority of our naval forces excluded, on our part, any action in the Mediterranean. This situation gave the Imperials a considerable advantage, communications between Spain and Italy being only possible by sea. Steps, followed by a favorable result, were taken in Constantinople, to obtain the cooperation of the Ottoman fleet. In July of the year 1552, Sinan-pasha appeared on the coasts of Italy with one hundred and three galleys, heading west to effect his junction with the French forces.[52]

52

Sinan learned at Ostia, where he had put in, that thirty-nine galleys, under the command of Andrew Doria, had left Genoa to embark two thousand Germans at La Spezzia, destined to reinforce the garrison of Naples. He moved away from land in order to keep the lookouts on the coast ignorant of his position, and he anchored at the island of Ponce, waiting, before setting out, for new information on the enemy's position. One of the pasha's lieutenants, the corsair Dragut, was keeping watch with twelve galleys some distance from the Turkish army's anchorage. Doria, coming from La Spezzia, had made the mistake of steering offshore; on the night of August 5, Dragut's ships were sighted. The army, convinced that it had fallen into the midst of the Ottoman fleet, whose strength it knew, was seized by panic; abandoning all idea of resistance, it fled by force of oars. Dragut, attaching himself to the pursuit of one of the divisions of this army, seized seven galleys. The dispersal of the imperial fleet left the passage free for the French galleys. In the event of this meeting, it had been agreed that the combined army would anchor off Naples; it was hoped that the presence of such a large number of ships carrying landing troops would lead to an uprising of the population. Sinan-pasha, whose supplies were beginning to run out, did not want to wait for the French; after having made a demonstration in the Gulf of Naples, he set sail for the Bosphorus. At the beginning of May 1553, Sinan Pasha appeared again on the coasts of Italy with one hundred and fifty ships, among which were twenty French galleys.[53]

53

The combined fleet failed to reach Doria. The Turks landed on the coasts of Apulia, Sicily, the island of Elba, and Corsica, plundering and setting fire to the islands wherever they went. As the season drew on, Sinan Pasha headed for Constantinople, leaving the French in Corsica. Since maritime superiority belonged to the Spanish naval forces after the Ottomans' departure, Doria was able to bring troops, supplies, and munitions to this island, to whose preservation Genoa attached the greatest importance. The French were on the verge of evacuating Corsica when the imperial fleet disappeared. Doria had been called to the Gulf of Naples by the presence of Dragut on the coasts of Apulia. This famous corsair, instead of following Sinan-pasha, had remained in the Mediterranean; having been able to gather under his command a large number of galleys, he scoured the sea more for his own account than for that of the Sultan. The prior of Capua, Strozzi, having abandoned the French service in 1551, the Baron de la Garde, relieved of his disgrace, had been designated to replace him in command of the galleys. Taking skillful advantage of Doria's distance, the Baron de la Garde brought reinforcements to Corsica where the French, supported by the population, were making rapid progress. Doria, warned that Dragut had headed towards the Morea, returned to Corsica; after disembarking troops, he made way for Porto-Ercole where the French were, it was said, to make a landing. Hardly had he left when Dragut appeared and put men and cannons ashore; at the same time, the Baron of the Guard, informed of the movements of the Ottoman fleet, arrived from Marseille. Dragut did not like long-term operations and especially those which brought more honor than money.[54]

54

Some disagreements arose between him and Baron de la Garde, and he withdrew. The return of Doria, by making it impossible for the French expeditionary force to receive relief, led to the evacuation of Corsica by our troops. None of the campaigns carried out in concert with the Ottoman fleet had yielded the results we had hoped for. The Turks, little interested in undertaking military operations, were only concerned with profit; at all points along the coast where they made landings, only ruins remained, and thousands of captives, thrown onto their ships, took the road to Constantinople. Our name was associated with acts that set civilization back several centuries; Considerable expenditure had been made to meet the needs of the Turkish fleet, mainly during the winter months spent by Barbarossa in the harbor of Toulon. We had therefore paid dearly for an alliance, which damaged our reputation, and from which we had derived only very small advantages.

Flemish shipowners having seized several ships belonging to the port of Dieppe, the merchants of this city made urgent steps in Paris to obtain compensation for the wrong that had been done to them. Since the king had no ships at his disposal, Dieppe undertook the fitting out of a flotilla, even agreeing to pay half the cost, on the condition, however, that the captains be children of the city. Nineteen boats, usually engaged in fishing or coastal trade, were fitted out; the tonnage of the largest of these vessels did not exceed one hundred and twenty tons. The captains elected as their leader Louis Bures, Lord of Espineville, who received an admiral's commission from the king.[55]

55

Coligny, charged with sending it to him, "thanked him in the name of His Majesty for what he and his men were undertaking for the honor of the kingdom." Leaving the port on August 5, 1555, the Dieppe ships set out on a cruise between Boulogne and Dover, monitoring the passage of ships flying the flag of Flanders. On the 11th, several large vessels, sailing in convoy, were sighted in the southwest; it was a Flemish fleet, comprising twenty-four hourques, of the size of four to five hundred tons. These vessels, which all had cannons and a large crew, were very high above the water. It was therefore difficult to board them; On the other hand, the Dieppe people, very inferior to their adversaries in terms of artillery, could not use any other mode of combat. The Flemish, confident in their strength, paid little attention to the small vessels in front of them. The Dieppe people threw grappling hooks on board the Flemish hourques and rushed to board them. The captain of the *Palme*, that was the name of one of the French vessels, seeing himself, after the loss of the greater part of his crew, unable to continue the fight, had fire lances and combustible materials thrown onto the vessel he was fighting. The fire which broke out on the Flemish hourque spread to the Dieppe vessel; the latter, despite its efforts, was unable to free itself. The fighting ceased and the ships of both nations had no other aim than to get away from the burning ships. Three Dieppe ships, caught between the Flemish horques, were crushed and sank, along with their crews; the other French ships managed to rise to windward, while the Flemish horques, slower to maneuver, remained entangled with each other. Twelve Flemish ships, half-consumed, disappeared into the waves.[56]

56

The people of Dieppe did not lose sight of the purpose for which they had put to sea; barely freed, they attacked the Flemish hourques that had been spared by the fire. A few managed to escape; six fell into our hands. The French flotilla, with the captured ships in tow, entered Dieppe to the cheers of the inhabitants, who had rushed to the port, and to the sound of bells and artillery from the ramparts.

The war had been going on for several years. Charles V, weary of everything, aged before his time, yearned for the peace of the cloister. Having resolved to abdicate, but not wanting to hand over power to his successor amidst the difficulties of a war with France, he concluded, in 1556, with Henry II, the Truce of Vaucelles, which was to last five years. After handing over the empire to his brother Ferdinand and the kingdoms of Spain and Naples to his son Philip, Charles V retired to the monastery of Saint-Just, in Extremadura, from where he continued to exercise active supervision over the affairs of the empire. He died there two years later. In 1557, Henry II broke the Truce of Vaucelles; war recommenced with Spain and England as adversaries. At the beginning of his reign, Henry II had had no other objective than to bring France closer to its natural borders. In 1557, instead of concentrating all his forces in the North, he made the mistake of diverting part of them to drive the Spanish out of Italy and reconquer the Kingdom of Naples. The loss of the Battle of Saint-Quentin, won by Philibert-Emmanuel, Duke of Savoy, against the Constable of Montmorency, caused the troops who were fighting beyond the Alps to be recalled. The Duke of Guise restored the honour of our arms by winning a resounding success not over the Spanish, who had returned to the Low Countries, but over their allies, the English.[57]

57

In the middle of winter, he arrived, by a rapid march, in front of Calais, regarded by the enemy as being safe from any attack, and he took it after eight days of siege. The capture of this city, which erased the last memory of foreign domination on our soil, aroused great enthusiasm in our country, and made the name of Guise very popular. Calais had been in English hands for two hundred and ten years. A considerable armament, which included no fewer than one hundred and sixty ships, carrying a landing force, left the ports of England and headed for our coasts. The troops, put ashore, took the Conquet, which was burned after being plundered. The hastily assembled militias attacked the English and forced them to re-embark after suffering heavy losses. The expedition's goal was to capture the port of Brest; this conquest would have compensated for the loss of Calais, which had been keenly felt by the English people. The Treaty of Cambrésis, signed in 1559, gave France the city of Calais and the three bishoprics, Metz, Toul, and Verdun.

François II, who ascended the throne in 1559, died a year later; there were no maritime expeditions during his reign. With Charles IX, the religious wars began; the bloody struggles, waged within the country, could not be favorable to the development of the navy. In 1573, La Rochelle, in revolt, was besieged by the Duke of Anjou. Baron de la Garde was only able to assemble nine small vessels and six galleys, manned by insufficient personnel, to blockade the port. Although the weakness of the flotilla under his command forced him to remain under the guns of the forts built on the coast, he was skillful enough to repel an English fleet that had come to supply La Rochelle.[58]

58

In 1583, during the reign of Henry III, sixty ships, carrying six thousand soldiers, set sail to support, against Philip III, Don Antonio's claim to the crown of Portugal. An encounter took place in the waters of the Azores between French ships and a superior Spanish fleet. We lost eight ships and two thousand men; the wounded and prisoners were slaughtered, and the commander of the French troops, Leon Strozzi, fell alive into the hands of the Spanish and was thrown into the sea.

Two events of great political and maritime importance took place, the first during the reign of Charles IX, and the second during the reign of Henry III. In 1570, Turkey, in defiance of existing treaties, seized the island of Cyprus. The Ottoman troops massacred most of the inhabitants; those they spared were taken captive. The news of the capture of Cyprus and of the acts of ferocity committed by the Turks aroused general indignation in Europe. The Pope, the Republic of Venice, and the King of Spain united to combat the power of Turkey in the Mediterranean. The allied fleet, consisting of seventy-one Spanish galleys, nine manned by the Knights of Malta, twelve belonging to the Papal States, and one hundred and twenty Venetian vessels, formed a total of two hundred and twelve ships; it set sail in 1571 for the archipelago, under the superior command of Don Juan of Austria. Off Lepanto, the Ottoman fleet was sighted; This one, placed under the orders of the captain pasha Muezzinzade-Aly, had two hundred and sixty-four ships. On October 7, the battle began. The two fleets were arranged in an immense front line, slightly curved on the wings, in the shape of a crescent.[59]

59

Seven Venetian galleasses, the strongest vessels in the fleet, were placed in the center of the Confederate fleet, on a second line indented with the first. The cannon, although sea artillery had made great progress at this time, played a minor role. The two fleets rushed at each other with veritable fury. The Ottomans, completely defeated, lost thirty thousand men, killed, drowned, or taken prisoner; one hundred and thirty galleys remained in the hands of the allies and ninety-four were sunk or burned. The Battle of Lepanto freed fifteen thousand Christians from slavery; the victors had only to regret the loss of fifteen galleys and eight thousand men. The victory at Lepanto did not only take away men and ships from the Porte; it also destroyed the prestige that had surrounded the Ottoman navy for many years. Turkey still had large fleets; it must even be added that it built up a large armament the following year. Nevertheless, after the defeat at Lepanto, it ceased to exercise a predominant action in the Mediterranean, and especially in the western basin of this sea. While consternation reigned in Constantinople, the Christian populations on the shores of the Mediterranean greeted, with a long cry of joy, a victory that promised them a better future and avenged them for so many acts of atrocities, murders, pillages, and fires committed by the Muslims. Spain, having possessions in Italy, and occupying several points on the coast of Africa, was particularly interested in weakening the maritime power of Turkey. It remained, it is true, for her to defend her coasts as well as her merchant marine against the ever-redoubtable Algerian corsairs, but this requirement could not have the scope of a struggle with the navy of a great State.[60]

60

The King of Spain, learning that Queen Elizabeth had committed herself, by a secret treaty, to provide aid in men and money to the revolting provinces of the Netherlands, felt deeply irritated; on the other hand, Philip II could not forget the devastation Drake had committed in the midst of peace, on the coasts of America. Determined to avenge with distinction the grievances he had against England, he gave the order to equip a fleet powerful enough to ensure the landing of an army on the soil of Great Britain.

In 1588, one hundred and fifty-two ships were ready to put to sea; some were as much as twelve hundred tons. Arrangements had been made, say the memoirs of that time, so that the crews would not be hit by musket fire. Thick beams had been placed on the overhanging works to protect them from the cannon; finally, the masts were covered with cables and ropes. This fleet, carrying three thousand cannons, was manned by a personnel amounting to thirty-two thousand men, of whom only eight thousand sailors were counted. It was placed under the orders of the Duke of Medina-Celi; the command of the forces intended to act, as soon as the landing was made, was devolved to Alexander Farnese. This famous general, who was at the head of the Spanish army in the Netherlands, was to keep part of his troops ready to embark on the fleet of the Duke of Medina-Celi. When Philip II's plans became known, the English made the greatest efforts to ward off the danger that threatened them. One hundred and sixty ships were assembled; among this number, there were scarcely more than thirty-two warships, among which we must mention the *Triumph*, of a thousand tons, the *Revenge* and the *Arc-Royal*, of eight hundred tons.[61]

61

The other ships were borrowed from trade; the City of London had equipped thirty-eight ships at its own expense. The elite of English sailors manned this fleet commanded by Grand Admiral Howard, with Drake, Forbisher, and Hawkins under his command. The Dutch, understanding very well that their cause was linked to that of England, immediately armed themselves. They considered themselves to have nothing to fear from the Spanish fleet, whose ships, due to their deep draft, could not approach their coasts, but they feared the undertakings of the Duke of Parma, who had a large number of small vessels at his disposal. Of the ninety ships that made up their fleet, sixty were destined to guard their coasts; the others went to join the English.

The Spanish fleet left Lisbon on June 1, 1588; assailed by a gale, it went to La Coruña to repair its damage. Three ships had disappeared during this short crossing. On July 19, the Duke of Medina-Celi entered the English Channel. The English moved resolutely to meet the Spanish; determined not to engage in a pitched battle, they harassed this large fleet, sailing without order, and captured ships every day. The Duke of Medina-Celi continued on its way, its only concern being to join the Duke of Parma; arriving in the Pas-de-Calais, it anchored off the coast of France. The English having launched fire ships during the night, disorder ensued in the Spanish fleet; some ships sailed, others cut their cables and ran aground. The next day, the Duke of Medina-Celi, having managed to rally his ships, continued on his way. Attacked a few days later at anchor at Gravelines, the Spanish fleet suffered further losses.[62]

62

Deeply discouraged, despairing of the success of the mission entrusted to him, although he still had considerable forces under his command, the Duke of Medina-Celi had no other thought than to bring his fleet back to Spain. A gale that lasted three days added to his fleet's misfortunes; ships sank in collisions, others lost their masts and were wrecked on the coast. When the end of the bad weather allowed them to get underway, the Spanish headed north, rounded the Orkney Islands, and entered the Irish Sea. Nothing better demonstrates the Duke of Medina-Celi's state of mind than this voyage, undertaken in September through difficult waters, without charts or pilots, with the sole aim of avoiding any further encounter with the English. The Duke of Medina-Celi's fleet, when it reached Cadiz, had lost, according to historians, ten thousand men and thirty-two ships captured, sunk, or wrecked. These figures are obviously too low. The English claim that of all the ships comprising the Duke of Medina-Celi's fleet, only forty-six reached Spain. Such was the end of a campaign undertaken with a fleet that the Spanish called, even before it set sail, the Invincible Armada.

It is reported that the King of Spain, upon learning of the disaster suffered by his fleet, simply said: "I had sent it to fight the English, not the winds and the waves." Philip II was mistaken. His fleet had been beaten less by the elements than by men. Until the day when the Duke of Medina-Celi, despairing of the success of the campaign, gave up on joining the Duke of Parma, the bad weather had not exceeded the limit of what the ships of that time could endure.[63]

63

The maritime disaster occurred during the retreat to areas where, as the season drew on, gales were to be expected. However, the retreat was the result of battles in which the Spanish had been consistently unsuccessful. We see, on one side, an immense supply of equipment prepared long in advance and, on the other, a few ships belonging to the queen, joined by numerous merchant ships hastily converted into warships. But the English fleet was manned by an elite personnel, led by men like Drake, Forbisher, and Hawkins. It was this elite personnel, and not the bad weather, that defeated the Spanish. These events date back several centuries; nevertheless, it is worth recalling them because they contain a lesson applicable to all times.

Philip II, far from being discouraged, ordered preparations for a new expedition. England, which had penetrated the secret of its adversary's weakness, did not wait for Spain to be ready. Grand Admiral Howard headed for Cadiz with a fleet comprising forty warships and eighty merchant ships. He appeared before Cadiz, entered the harbor and forced the embassador line. A landing force of 3,200 men under the command of the Earl of Essex seized the city and castle of Cadiz. The Earl of Essex wanted to keep his conquest, but a Council of War, assembled to examine this question, having expressed a contrary opinion, the English, after pillaging and destroying the city, re-embarked and put to sea. At the death of Elizabeth, there were in the English arsenals forty-two vessels of seventeen thousand tons and manned by eight thousand five hundred men, sailors, soldiers and gunners.[64]

64

At the end of the 16th century, England, replacing Spain, became the leading maritime power in Europe.

II

When Henry III died in 1589, civil war was ravaging France. Henry of Béarn, already King of Navarre, was heir to the crown; before ascending the throne, he had to defeat the Leaguers supported by Spain. The Treaty of Vervins, signed in 1598, ended the war with that power; Spain returned all the places it had taken from us in the north, with the exception of Cambrai. Our weakness, from a maritime point of view, was so great that the Duke of Tuscany had not feared, in several circumstances, to ally himself with the enemies of France. The islands of If and Pomègue, situated at the entrance to the port of Marseille, were occupied by his troops. To an envoy of the King of France who made observations on his conduct, he replied: "If your master had had forty galleys in the port of Marseille, I would have been careful not to act as I did." The Hyères Islands had become the cruising center of the Barbary corsairs. In order to avoid these waters, the ships leaving Marseille to go to an Italian port, went out to sea, then, returning to check the land near Antibes, they extended the coast to Genoa. This road was the only one that offered them some safety, but, not far from Antibes, new obstacles arose before them.[65]

65

The Duke of Savoy forced merchant ships to stop at the port of Villefranche, where, before they were allowed to continue their voyage, they had to pay a very high duty calculated on the value of the goods they were carrying. Galleys cruising offshore ensured the execution of the Duke of Savoy's wishes. Henry IV, having no fleet to put to sea, could not resort to force to avenge the insults inflicted on our flag. Only diplomatic means were open. In 1598, Cardinal d'Ossat obtained, with the support of the Holy See, the restitution of the castle on the Île d'If as well as the Pomègue Islands. In 1603, the Duke of Savoy, yielding to repeated demands, was willing to renounce the contribution he demanded, without any right, from ships passing off the harbor of Villefranche. Henry IV and his advisors, first among whom must be placed Sully, first of all took care to establish our military situation on a solid basis. At the death of the king, France possessed a permanent army established according to the modern system: the troops were regularly paid and observed strict discipline. The artillery, engineering and transport services were organized. It was with the army prepared by Henry IV that Richelieu began the struggle he undertook against the House of Austria. Henry IV, had he lived, would undoubtedly have created a state navy. President Jeannin, our ambassador to Holland, had been ordered to conduct a thorough study of all issues relating to the organization of a navy. Some efforts were made in this direction, but upon the death of the king, the work in progress in the ports was suspended, and the few ships that we had ready to go to sea were disarmed.[66]

66

During the course of the 16th century, the navy played, from a military point of view, a role similar to the one we indicated in the summary made at the end of the reign of Charles VII. The action of the fleets, when we were at war with England, was most often decisive. France only protected its shores by holding the British navy in check. When this result was not achieved, the coastal towns were pillaged, burned, or captured. Thus, Boulogne fell into the hands of our adversaries, and we had to make a considerable effort at sea to retake this city. The same reasoning applies, with no less force, to the struggles we were waging with Spain. If we have sufficient forces at sea, the communications of this power with Flanders and its Italian possessions become, if not impossible, at least very difficult. Thus we see Charles V making the greatest sacrifices to attach Doria and the galleys of Genoa to his service. For many years, we have balanced, with various alternatives, the maritime fortunes of the nations with which we are at war, but, since the reigns of Charles IX and Henry III, the situation has changed and our inferiority has become manifest. The pretensions of England are growing; this power is arrogating to itself, on the seas which surround it, rights of sovereignty which have no other foundation than our weakness. In 1603, Sully, sent to compliment the King of Scotland, James I, on his accession to the English throne, accepted, as a courtesy, the offer to pass through the strait on the ship manned by the Vice-Admiral of England, who had been sent to meet him. De Vic, Vice-Admiral of France, accompanied the English ship: arriving at Dover, he had the French flag hoisted, which was saluted by a cannon shot.[67]

67

The captain of the ship, aboard which our ambassador was, became very irritated; refusing to allow a flag other than his country's to fly in this sea, he gave the order to fire on the French ship. The English Vice-Admiral presented his captain's apologies to Vice-Admiral de Vic, and the matter had no further consequences. However, Sully remembered this unfortunate event and understood that only force, represented by a powerful navy, could prevent our neighbors across the Channel from using similar methods against us.

The shipbuilder's skill has followed an upward trend; the short and rounded ships of the Middle Ages are becoming longer, and their shapes are becoming more refined. Tonnage is increasing; we see ships of eight hundred, nine hundred and a thousand tons. The sides of the ships, built especially for war, are pierced with numerous gun ports. Large calibers replace the low-power cannons with which the ships were initially armed. Some ships have several covered batteries; at the front and rear, castles are erected, sometimes with several floors. During the course of the 16th century, there is no change in the tactical formation of combat. The new weapon, the cannon, is mainly used to make stronger, from the point of view of attack and defense, the part of the ship that is presented to the enemy, that is to say, the front. The castles erected on the front and rear of the ships, called high-board castles, are equipped with artillery; these castles must serve as a refuge for the crews of ships whose deck is invaded. The front order, that is to say the attack by the ram and the shock, responding very exactly to the situation of the galleys, the combat formation of these vessels was not to undergo any modification, even following the invention of artillery.[68]

68

Two fleets, composed of galleys, rushed each other with force of oars; after a volley of artillery fired at close range, the collision took place. While the bow remained the stronghold of the galleys, this was no longer the case for the round ships. Although no change was made to the tactics, the movement that would lead to this result was beginning to emerge. Thus, in 1545, in the fleet commanded by Admiral d'Annebaut, the round ships, which had become sailing vessels, and the galleys formed two distinct divisions. It was beginning to be understood that these two categories of vessels could not appear in the same order of battle. The glorious day of Lepanto marked both the apogee of the oar-powered navy and the beginning of its decline. No more battles involving 500 galleys would be seen. A new navy was emerging and growing; this navy would consider the galley as an auxiliary to the round ships; it would grant it no other role.

In 1543, ten English ships belonging to a merchant company were returning from the Levant when, abeam of Gibraltar, they were attacked by twelve Spanish galleys commanded by Jean-André Doria, great-nephew of the famous admiral of Charles V and Philip II. The English ships were armed; forming in a single line, they opened a very heavy fire on the galleys, which were forced to attack from the front to use their artillery. Doria, who was coming up with his oars, intended to come alongside the merchant ships and board them. He assumed that this operation, carried out quickly, would not suffer any difficulty, but his galleys, caught in the crossfire of the English, received such damage that he was forced to retreat. The force of circumstances indicated what the battle formation of the round ships should be.[69]

69

Since the organization of the galley corps in 1481, the State has had vessels of this category built, the arming and equipment of galleys requiring expenditures that trade can only with difficulty afford. As for round ships, the State possesses none in the Ocean or the Mediterranean; a few rare vessels, among which we must mention the *Marie la Cordelière*, distinguished by the glorious conduct of *Portzmoguer*, and the *Corraquon*, burned in the harbor of Le Havre, constitute exceptions. When it is necessary to assemble a military fleet, the State resorts to the methods we have indicated previously; it takes all the merchant ships that can be usefully employed, and the government compensates for the inadequacy of this means by turning to foreigners. It is mainly from Venice, Genoa, Hamburg, and Danzig that the ships intended to supplement our armaments come to us. The serious drawbacks of this system are beginning to be recognized. Chartered ships retain their captains, and these too often show great indifference to the struggles in which they are involved; far from seeking danger, they strive to avoid it. It is difficult to obtain from these captains the obedience that the conduct of military operations demands, and, in difficult circumstances, they can no longer be relied upon. Finally, the difference between warships and merchant ships is growing every day. Nations wishing to operate at sea create a navy. France alone does not bow to this necessity.

The great maritime movement imagined by Christopher Columbus continued throughout the 16th century.[70]

70

The Portuguese, with the Almeidas, the Alvarez Cabrals, and the Albuquerques, founded an empire in India; they extended as far as China and Japan. Portugal considered itself the leading maritime power in Europe, but this situation did not last. In 1582, Portuguese India fell into the hands of the Spanish, who were unable to hold it; the Dutch took control. Progress on the American coast was no less rapid. The Venetian Sebastian Cabot, sailing under the British flag, made two voyages to the coasts of North America, with the dual aim of finding a passage leading to the China Seas and founding a colony. Having advanced, in the second voyage, to the sixty-seventh degree of latitude, he intended to continue his route towards the north, when his crew, which already included a large number of sick people, refused to go further. Having passed into the service of Spain, Sebastian Cabot headed towards the south of America; arriving at the mouth of the Plata, he went up the course of this river. The Portuguese Alvarez Cabral, going to India, deviated from the coast of Africa near which he knew he would find contrary winds and currents; carried west as a result of the new route he had taken, he discovered Brazil. America Vespuce and the Spaniard Ojedo, seeking a passage to go to the Moluccas, visited the coasts of Venezuela, Guiana and part of the coast of the Patagonians south of the Plata. Settlements were founded on the American continent; Fernand Cortez undertook the conquest of Mexico in 1519, which he completed in three years; Pizarro seized Peru in 1534, and a lieutenant of Pizarro, Almagro, took control of Chile in 1540.

The Portuguese Magellan, who had, under the command of Albuquerque, campaigned in the Moluccas, by the only route then known, that of the east, planned to arrive at the same point by taking the opposite direction.[71]

71

He was convinced that he would find, at the southern end of the eastern coast of America, a passage through which he could enter the sea seen by the Spaniard Balboa, who had crossed Central America from east to west in 1514. Magellan, favorably received in Spain, obtained from Emperor Charles V five ships with which he set sail on September 20, 1519. After discovering, in 1521, the strait that bears his name, he entered the Great Ocean and landed in the Philippines; the route to Asia, via western Europe, was found. The voyage to the Moluccas from the east being known, Magellan's arrival at the same point, by the opposite route, consummated the geographical revolution begun by Christopher Columbus, discovering the New World, in 1492, and by Vasco da Gama who had rounded the Cape of Good Hope, in 1498. The circumnavigation of the globe was complete, and there could no longer be any doubt about the shape of the terrestrial globe. The Earth, as Christopher Columbus supposed, was round and similar to the planets that gravitate, in space, around the sun.

At the time of departure, the expedition led by Magellan consisted of five ships; one of them had abandoned its leader before the flotilla arrived in the strait; of the other four, only one returned to Spain, it was the *Vittoria* commanded by a valiant sailor, the Basque pilot Sebastian del Cano. Magellan had been killed fighting the enemies of the king of the island of Zebu, who had declared himself a vassal of the Emperor Charles V. This campaign, which ended in 1522, is one of the most remarkable ever made. In 1578, fifty-six years after the voyage we have just reported, Drake, entering the southern sea by the Strait of Magellan, went up the coast of South America towards the north.[72]

72

This Englishman, who displayed the greatest qualities as a sailor, behaved like a pirate. Knowing that the Spanish ships returning to the mother country were carrying rich cargoes, he seized all those he found on his route; he even made several landings to seize booty. Drake, after advancing as far as the forty-eighth degree of north latitude, wanted to return to Europe. Fearing being captured, and, in this event, treated as a pirate after the damage done by his flotilla to Spanish trade, he judged it prudent not to appear, a second time, on the coasts of Peru and Chile; his return was made via the Moluccas and the Cape of Good Hope. When Drake anchored in the harbor of Plymouth, thirty-four months had passed since his departure; of the five ships which made up the expedition, he brought back only one, the one he had boarded at the beginning of the campaign and which he had not left, a small vessel of one hundred tons. The spirit of discovery was then in all its force. A century had not passed since Christopher Columbus had landed on the island of Guanahani, and bold navigators had visited the Antilles, Florida, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Patagonia, the Plata, Brazil, the coasts of Guiana, Venezuela, etc. The Europeans had shown themselves on three great rivers, the Amazon, the Orinoco and the Plata. If South America was almost entirely known, it was not the same for North America; this, with the exception of Canada, had been little explored, and it may be noted as a curious fact that, at the end of the 16th century, not a single Englishman had yet settled there. Americus Vespuce, who died in 1516, is the first among the discoverers to have left memoirs.[73]

73

The account of his voyages, printed in 1522 in Paris and in 1555 in Basel, drew the attention of all those interested in the discovery of the New World and the geographical revolution that resulted from it. It was probably this circumstance, more than the fact of having been the first to reach the American continent, that brought Americus Vespucius to prominence and gave scholars and geographers the idea of associating his name with the great event of the end of the 15th century. Perhaps it is a mistake to accuse Americus Vespucius of intending to take away from Christopher Columbus the glory of having discovered the New World. In 1596, Willem Barentz, a Dutchman, exploring the Arctic Sea to find a passage leading to India, discovered Spitsbergen.

Before examining the part played by French sailors in the maritime movement of the 16th century, it is necessary to recall what our maritime borders were at different periods of our history. We know that Poitou, Aunis and Saintonge were united with France under Charles V, Brittany during the reign of Francis I, and Provence under Louis XI; as for Ponthieu and the county of Boulogne, provinces detached from France in 1279, England retained them until 1350. Thus, for many years, France had no other limits, on the sea side, than the coast of Languedoc and part of the Channel coast. Fortunately, we had, in the North, a remarkable maritime population. The Normans, established on the soil of Neustria, giving up their livelihood by brigandage, had devoted themselves to trade; their ships frequented the ports of Portugal and Spain. The Normans followed the Moors to the coast of Africa. Historians of the town of Dieppe state that ships belonging to this port founded settlements on the west coast of Africa in the second half of the 14th century.[74]

74

The people of Dieppe are said to have explored the coast from Rufisque to the Gulf of Guinea at that time.

France's commercial relations with foreign nations had developed considerably during the 16th century; a new era for navigation was dawning, but the absolute lack of security, threatening shipowners with ruin, halted the growth of the merchant navy. Disorder, or rather the most complete anarchy, reigned at sea. English ships, cruising in the English Channel and along the ocean coasts, were capturing merchant ships leaving our ports. England considered itself the sovereign of the seas, and to support its claims, it had what we did not possess: a navy whose importance was growing every day. The treaty concluded in 1604 between Henry IV and the Sultan had freed trade from Turkish pirates, but the corsairs of Tunis and Algiers, having long since ceased to obey orders from Constantinople, reigned supreme in the Mediterranean. The corsairs of the African regencies were not the only enemies to be feared. The Venetians and the Italian princes were no more scrupulous than the Barbary pirates; they took men capable of rowing their galleys wherever they found them, on the open sea or on the coast. Merchant ships crossing the Strait of Gibraltar ran the risk of being captured by the Spanish. Finally, offshore, safety was no greater; merchant ships were exposed to encountering, on their route, numerous vessels armed with the sole purpose of piracy. Our admiralties issued letters of marque to French vessels that accepted the mission of hunting down vessels engaged in piracy, but the cure was often worse than the disease.[75]

75

These ships, manned by adventurers, were primarily concerned with returning to port with prizes, and they sometimes captured foreign ships engaged in perfectly legal trade. When these incidents occurred, and they were frequent, reprisals were not long in coming. The nation, whose ships had been unjustly captured, seized the French ships that were in its territory as compensation for the harm done to its trade. The admiralties, receiving a significant share of the proceeds from the prizes, did not pay scrupulous attention to the selection of ships to be used as warships; for the same reason, they did not subject the captures made by these ships to strict scrutiny. This conduct constituted a kind of encouragement to piracy, which was not only practiced on foreign ships, but often also on French vessels. Ordinances issued with the aim of regulating the service of vessels commissioned to hunt pirates highlight the situation we have just described. Moved by the complaints that arose from all sides, the royal power declared, by an edict issued in 1485, that from now on it alone would issue letters of reprisal.

France, in its relations with foreign powers, and particularly with England, had endeavored to stop what a royal ordinance called "the irreparable evils, murders, pillages, and cruel evils committed every day at sea," but the stipulations contained in the treaties were not observed. This serious question could not be resolved by special conventions; it was necessary to arrive at a code, recognized and accepted by all nations.[76]

76

Statesmen, philosophers, and merchants alike fully acknowledged this necessity, but some time would still pass before this idea could be realized. However, at the beginning of the 17th century, the movement was taking shape. The Portuguese intended to prohibit other peoples from navigating the west coast of Africa and the East Indies; on the other hand, the Spanish wanted to reserve for themselves the exclusive right to navigate the sea discovered by Magellan. Finally, the King of England, by virtue of an unjustified right of sovereignty, continually hindered navigation and especially fishing in British seas. This state of affairs was particularly detrimental to the Republic of the Netherlands, an essentially maritime and trading nation. In 1609, a book was published, entitled Mare Liberum, in which a Dutchman, whose name has remained famous, Grotius, made himself the defender of the freedom of the seas. Grotius was perhaps guided by the interests of his country, but the cause he supported was just and his book had a great impact in Europe. France, which also had cause to complain about the actions of Portugal, Spain and England, gave the work of the Dutch writer a very favourable reception. It was not the same on the other side of the strait. The English rejected, with no less vigor than the Republic of the United Provinces, the pretensions of the Portuguese and the Spanish, but, too wise to invoke the reasons put forward by Grotius, they contested the legitimacy of the titles on which these two powers based the right of property that they attributed to themselves.[77]

77

The principle of the freedom of the seas could not be applied to a nation that claimed sovereignty over all the seas that bathe the coast of Great Britain as far as the shores of neighboring states. The jurist Selden was tasked with refuting the Dutch writer; he was also to legitimize England's claims with seemingly legal arguments. Selden, putting much talent into the service of a bad cause, achieved the dual goal assigned to his efforts. In 1635, he published a book entitled Mare Clausum, in which he concluded by stating that the sea, as well as the land, could be private property; neither natural law nor the law of nations, the English author added, were in contradiction with this doctrine. Then, from principle to application, he declared that the King of Great Britain had an absolute right of sovereignty over the seas surrounding his empire. The English, as far as they were concerned, would not make any concessions; on the other hand, they were determined to reject the claims of the Portuguese and the Spanish. Selden's book gave them, in both cases, the appearance of right.[78]

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BOOK IV

Abandonment of the Navy during the Minority Troubles. - Meeting of the States-General. - Richelieu, Prime Minister. - Abolition of the Admiralty. - Assembly of Notables. - Siege of La Rochelle. - Measures taken to ensure effective protection of maritime trade. - Battles in the Ocean and the Mediterranean. - Death of the Cardinal. - The Navy under the Regency. - Colbert. - Expedition against the Barbary Pirates. - The Duke of Beaufort surrenders in the English Channel. - Expedition to Candia. - Alliance of France and England against Holland. - Battles waged by the Allies against the United Provinces Navy. - Peace concluded between England and Holland. - France is at war with the United Provinces and Spain.

I

During the troubles of the minority, the naval projects were abandoned. A few years after the accession to the throne of Louis XIII, our maritime weakness was so great that the government could not put to sea sufficient forces to stop the depredations that Protestant ships, leaving the port of La Rochelle, were committing on the coasts of Guyenne, Poitou and Brittany. Louis XIII (b.1601-1643), declared under aged in October 1614, relinquished power to Marie de Medici. The queen mother, faced with the difficulties she encountered in governing, decided to convene the Estates General. A reading of the notebooks of this assembly, which met at the end of 1614, bears witness to the unfortunate situation in which the military navy and the merchant navy found themselves.[79]

79

Events would soon show that a war fleet was necessary, not only to protect our trade and safeguard our dignity abroad, but also to ensure peace at home. In 1620, La Rochelle, in revolt again, served as a refuge for the Huguenots, joined by all the malcontents. Louis XIII had the city invested, but he could only take control of it on the condition of having sufficient naval force to tightly blockade the port. Ten galleys were sent from the Mediterranean to the Ocean, they crossed the Strait of Gibraltar in 1621, put in at Lisbon where they spent the winter, and the following year they rallied at Port-Louis the forces that we had managed, not without difficulty, to assemble. The king's ships, under the command of the Duke of Guise and Vice-Admiral Saint-Luc, defeated the La Rochelle fleet in a sustained battle, on both sides, with extreme vigor. The rebels, not receiving from abroad the help they were counting on, decided to negotiate. The Edict of Nantes was confirmed and tranquility appeared to be restored.

Peace did not last long; the religious war flared up again in 1625. The Duke of Soubise, one of the leaders of the Huguenot party, after seizing the island of Ré, entered the Blavet with twelve ships armed for war and ten light barques; he took six vessels that the king had armed to protect the coasts of the Mediterranean against the Barbary pirates. Louis XIII was obliged to request the assistance of a foreign power to fight the rebels. By virtue of a treaty signed at The Hague by our ambassador, the Count of Lesdiguières, the States General undertook to place twenty warships at our disposal. It was agreed that twelve of these vessels would have French captains and crews.[80]

80

We had introduced this clause out of fear that the Dutch would side with their coreligionists during the campaign. King Charles I agreed to provide Louis XIII with a few ships; these received French soldiers intended to contain any crews who might show an intention not to fight against the people of La Rochelle. This situation was as humiliating to national pride as it was dangerous for our security. The Dutch and English ships, joined by a few armed vessels at Port Louis, formed a fleet that was placed under the command of the Admiral of France, the Duke of Montmorency. On September 15, 1625, he fought a fierce battle with the rebel squadron commanded by Jean Guiton. Ten ships from La Rochelle fell into our hands; the others, prevented by the royal fleet from returning to the port of La Rochelle, took refuge in England. The island of Ré was recaptured from the insurgents. The news of the successes won by the Duke of Montmorency aroused very strong discontent in Holland and England. Following this movement of opinion, it was no longer possible to count on the assistance of foreign navies. France, reduced to its own resources, found itself unable to maintain the blockade of La Rochelle. Buckingham, the favorite of Charles I, was won over by the rebels, and his efforts tended to bring about a rupture between his country and ours. Wanting to precipitate events, he had several French merchant ships seized, without even invoking a pretext. Our ambassador having made very strong complaints, Buckingham, who did not feel supported by Parliament, had them released. A ship was sent to Calais with dispatches announcing that satisfaction had been given to France; this same ship, after the accomplishment of its mission, returned to England bringing back three vessels captured in the harbor of Calais.[81]

81

Buckingham, pursuing his plans, persuaded Charles I to provide aid to the rebels. The kingdom's situation was fraught with peril, but a great politician emerged and the difficulties were smoothed over.

In 1616, Richelieu, then Bishop of Luçon, had been called to power; disgraced in 1617, he remained for several years in the diocese of Avignon. After serving as an intermediary between the Queen Mother and the Court, he joined the Council in 1624. The following year, having become Prime Minister, he found himself in the presence of a new religious war supported by England. To restore peace to the kingdom, it was necessary to take La Rochelle from the Protestants. Now, to take this city, it was necessary to prevent the English, masters of the sea, from coming to its aid.

Richelieu resolved to give France a war fleet that would allow it to take, among maritime nations, the rank assigned to it by the extent of its coasts and the resources of its territory. The institutions of that time presented serious obstacles to the execution of this project. Maritime affairs were placed under the direction of a dignitary who bore the title of Admiral of France. This admiral had by right the command of the naval forces and the ports. The appointment of officers and officials serving in the navy belonged to him. With this organization, the unity of views essential to achieve the goal pursued by Richelieu could not exist. It was, indeed, difficult to believe that the admiral would consent to be only the docile instrument of the minister's wishes. On the other hand, the power that this person had was a fact absolutely irreconcilable with Richelieu's ideas on government.[82]

82

The admiralty, whose holder, Henri de Montmorency, received an indemnity of twelve hundred thousand livres, was abolished in 1626. The king created the office of Grand Master Chief and Superintendent of Navigation and Commerce, and entrusted it to Richelieu. The person occupying this new position was to enjoy, if not all the honors, at least all the rights previously vested in the Admiral of France. As a result, Richelieu found himself in possession of the authority required to carry out his plans.

The Assembly of Notables, meeting in Paris on December 2, 1626, asked the king, on the cardinal's proposal, that the State maintain, on a permanent basis, forty-five warships. Without a navy, it was said on this occasion, one can neither profit from peace nor wage war in an advantageous manner. Our merchant navy could have flourished, but what navigation could our ships do if they were not protected against the Turks in the Mediterranean and against pirates on the coasts of the Ocean; finally, how could the deep-sea fishing industry have developed when the fisheries of Newfoundland were inaccessible. It was therefore first of all up to the State to play the role of protector that belonged to it. Richelieu ordered ten warships from the most skilled builders in Holland on behalf of the French government. The creation of one hundred companies intended, under the title of ordinary naval companies, to serve on state vessels, had been decided in 1622. Until then, the soldiers embarked on the fleets were taken from the ranks of the army. In 1627, the hundred detached companies were abolished and the men who were part of them formed a regiment which took the name of the Marine Regiment.[83]

83

The Compagnies Franches of 1622 and the Marine Regiment into which they merged five years later were the first naval troops whose existence was officially recorded. It should be noted that these were not troops intended to serve in ports or colonies, but rather men called upon to form a significant portion of the war fleet's crews.

In 1627, the king came in person to lay siege to La Rochelle; he was accompanied by Richelieu, who had the firm intention of subduing the rebellious city, which had become a foreign ally. Louis XIII, having fallen ill, withdrew, leaving Richelieu, with the title of King's Lieutenant, in charge of the general direction of the operations on land and sea that the siege would entail. The English decided to intervene. On June 7, 1627, Buckingham left England with ninety ships, carrying a landing force of about ten thousand men. When he arrived off the Isle of Ré, thirty ships had remained behind; he waited for them for a few days, which allowed us to organize the defense. When his entire fleet was assembled, Buckingham put his troops ashore; they succeeded, despite the resistance they received, in driving the garrison back into the town of Saint-Martin, which they laid siege to. Thoiras, the governor of the Isle of Ré, was prepared to defend himself to the last extremity, but, having little food, famine could force him to capitulate. Captain Vallin, with sixteen boats manned by Basque sailors, crossed the English fleet at night, bringing food and ammunition to the besieged; this operation completed, he left taking the sick and wounded. A second attempt, made for the same purpose by Captain Audouin, from the Isle of Ré, was also crowned with success.[84]

84

We did not lose sight of the situation on Saint-Martin. A flotilla landed troops on the island; Shomberg, who commanded them, lifted the siege of Saint-Martin; meeting at Thoiras, he defeated the English and pursued them, inflicting heavy losses, even under the cannon of their fleet. They re-embarked and Buckingham set sail for England. The enemy remaining master of the sea, retained the possibility of resupplying La Rochelle. The flotilla, with the help of which we had landed troops on the Isle of Ré, provided useful assistance to military operations, but it was insufficient to cut off the besieged's communications with the open sea. However, the generals declared that La Rochelle would not be taken if this condition were not met. The cardinal decided to close the port with a dike. This work, thanks to the skill of the engineer Clément Métézau, who was in charge of this important operation, and to the dedication of our soldiers, was completed in the middle of 1628. This dike was 740 toises (4440 feet) long; it was 13 feet high and 18 feet wide at its base. It was built by pouring buildings filled with masonry. The details of the execution were entrusted to a master mason from Paris named Jean Tircot. From then on, no help could enter the place; two attempts made by the English to supply La Rochelle failed. The city, overcome by famine, opened its gates in October 1628.

If the method used to close the port of La Rochelle constituted a title of honor for the besiegers, on the other hand, the construction of the dike had cost a lot of time and money which would have been saved if a French squadron, cruising in front of La Rochelle, had prevented access to the enemy.[85]

85

The cardinal, more convinced than ever of the inferiority to which France would find itself condemned if it did not have a navy, immediately set to work to lay the foundations of a great maritime establishment. Warships became the property of the State; ports were improved and fortified, and, at the head of each of them, an ordinance, dated March 29, 1631, placed a general commissioner and a squadron leader. These two officials, to whom officers were attached, were given the mission of repairing and maintaining the vessels located in our arsenals, and of equipping those designated by the minister to go to sea. Captains and lieutenants, destined to embark on warships, were kept in permanent service. Richelieu allocated them a pay on land distinct from that which they received at sea. He founded gunnery schools and appointed, in each port, an officer specially responsible for artillery service. The necessary equipment was placed in the stores to arm the ships afloat. A second regiment of marine troops, which took the name of the Royal Regiment of Vessels, was created in 1635. The service of officers and crews on land and at sea was regulated. At that time, there was no specific legislation for the navy. In military ports, as well as on vessels temporarily armed for the king, the laws and customs in use on merchant ships were applied. A penal code, intended for the state navy, appeared in 1634.

Remembering the complaints that trade had made during the meeting of the States General in 1614, Richelieu had twelve galleys armed in the Mediterranean.[86]

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These vessels, located in the ports of Marseille, Toulon, and Antibes, were specifically tasked with monitoring the coasts of Provence and Languedoc; they were ordered to hunt down the Barbary pirates, who, so bold had impunity increased their courage, had not feared to take the Hyères Islands as a supply center. Negotiations were initiated with the pashas of Algiers, Tunis, and Morocco to ensure that the French flag was respected by the vessels of the three regencies. Measures were taken to ensure the safety of merchant ships on the ocean coasts. Although pushed into the background by the advent of round ships, as sailing ships were called, galleys still played an important role. They were led by Pierre de Gondi, who held the title of General of the Galleys; this position gave him command of the Hyères Islands and the King's lieutenant general in the seas of the Levant. Richelieu obtained, for an indemnity of five hundred and sixty thousand pounds, the transfer of this office to the son of one of his sisters, the Marquis du Pont de Courlay. The latter exercised the functions of his office, as far as the military part was concerned; he commanded the galleys when they were sent to sea, but the cardinal kept, in his hands, the superior direction of this service. This was, moreover, the goal he had set himself, in entrusting this position to his nephew.

In 1635, war broke out between France, allied with Holland, and Spain. Forty warships, with between eight and fifty-two cannons, six fire ships and fourteen cargo ships, were assembled in June 1636 in the harbor of Belle-Ile. This fleet, the armament of which represented a considerable effort on the part of the cardinal and his agents, was commanded by Henri de Lorraine, Count of Harcourt. [87]

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The latter had, alongside him, as advisor, Mgr d'Escoubleau de Sourdis, Archbishop of Bordeaux, who had distinguished himself at the Siege of La Rochelle. The captain of the flagship, Commander Des Gouttes, an old officer with extensive experience at sea, was, from a purely maritime point of view, the true head of the fleet. The instructions addressed to the Count of Harcourt prescribed him to go to the Mediterranean; he was to come to an agreement with Marshal de Vitry, Governor of Provence, to retake the Lérins Islands that the Spanish had taken from us the previous year. The king and his minister were particularly keen to see this project carried out. After embarking a corps of fourteen thousand soldiers, the fleet headed for the strait. In the first days of August, the Count of Harcourt rallied, at the Hyères Islands, the galleys of the Marquis du Pont de Courlay and a squadron of sailing ships, commanded by the Baron of Allemagne. He took, in accordance with the orders of the Court, the command in chief of our naval forces. As a result of disputes which arose between the Governor of Provence and the Count of Harcourt, the year passed in inaction. Marshal de Vitry had allowed the Lérins Islands to be taken through his negligence. The King, perhaps remembering the day of April 24, 1617, and supposing, on the other hand, that the Marquis de Vitry would make every effort to repair his fault, had shown himself very indulgent. In a Council of War, held at the beginning of 1637, the Marshal, displeased to find Mgr de Sourdis unwilling to accept his advice, became so angry that he struck him. When these facts became known, the King once again postponed the harsh measures, but the Marshal, having continued, despite the formal orders of the Court, to live on bad terms with the Archbishop, lost his command.[88]

88

The Count of Harcourt seized the Lérins Islands in May 1637. In 1638, Bishop de Sourdis supported Condé's operations as he besieged Fontarabie with a fleet of more than fifty warships. The army complained of the lack of effect its artillery was producing, so the navy landed eight guns and the men needed to man them. Spanish ships, taking refuge in the port of Passage, were captured. Eighteen enemy ships, en route to disembark troops at San Sebastian, were sighted and driven off by a division of our fleet cruising offshore. The Spanish were able to reach Guetaria Cove, where they took up a very strong position under the protection of batteries established on the coast. Bishop de Sourdis had them attacked by a detachment from his fleet, to which he added six fire ships. The cove of Guetaria being very narrow, only a small number of vessels could be deployed in front of the enemy. The French fleet therefore gained no advantage from its superiority; nevertheless, after a fierce battle, the Spanish ships were sunk or set on fire. The enemy's losses, according to Bishop de Sourdis's correspondence, amounted to five thousand men, killed or wounded; ours were of no importance. A vessel, very remarkable for that period, figured in Bishop de Sourdis's fleet. *La Couronne*, that was its name, was making considerable progress in the art of construction. This vessel had a keel of one hundred and twenty feet and a total length of two hundred feet, measured from the stern of the sterncastle to the end of the spur; and its greatest breadth, inside, was forty-four feet.[89]

89

Since the cannon had become the weapon of the navy, there was a tendency to exaggerate the number of guns on each ship; ships smaller than the *Couronne* carried up to two hundred cannons. This artillery overloaded the ship and could not be used due to the extreme proximity of the gun ports, separated by a space measuring five to six feet. The *Couronne* was armed with seventy-two cannons, the distance between each gun port was eleven feet. This ship, considered a masterpiece by the sailors of the time, had been built at La Roche-Bernard, under the direction of a famous carpenter, Charles Morieu, originally from Dieppe.

In August 1638, an encounter took place on the coast of Italy, not far from Genoa, between the galleys of France and those of Spain. The French won a resounding victory. Richelieu, speaking of this combat in his political testament, said: "Fifteen of our galleys attacked as many from Spain, and fought them with such great advantage that our enemies lost four to five thousand men and six galleys, among them a captain and two skippers." In 1639, in the month of July, Bishop de Sourdis was heading towards Corunna when his squadron was dispersed by an extremely violent gale. Some ships disappeared in the storm, others suffered considerable damage. After staying for some time at Belle-Ile for repairs, Bishop de Sourdis put to sea again. He ended his campaign without having the good fortune to encounter the enemy. On July 22, 1640, Armand Maillé de Brézé, placed at the head of the Ocean squadron, attacked the Indies fleet between Cape Saint-Vincent and Cadiz and forced it to retreat, after having captured or sunk six galleys. In 1641, Mgr de Sourdis, called to command our naval forces in the Mediterranean, captured several Spanish vessels in the port of Roses, then he blockaded the city of Tarragona which was besieged by a French army.[90]

90

On July 3, he had a first engagement with the Spanish galleys, which was favorable to him; attacked on the 22nd by superior forces, the archbishop was forced to lift the blockade. Our retreat allowed the Spanish to resupply Tarragona; now, this city, which had no more provisions, was on the point of capitulating. The conduct of Bishop de Sourdis, on July 3 and 22, had been irreproachable. Such was the opinion of the principal officers, among whom was Duquesne; nevertheless, his failure before Tarragona brought him disgrace. He lost his command, and he was forbidden to come to Paris. The Archbishop's services were no longer favorably regarded; after having been the Cardinal's trusted man, Bishop de Sourdis had become suspect, and Bishop de Besançon had been placed with him to monitor him. The Archbishop had compromised himself with imprudent words, and he had entered into relations with the Cardinal's enemies, which the latter did not forgive.

For some time already, and even before Louis XIII ascended the throne, gentlemen anxious to rebuild their fortunes had been asking that they be allowed to engage in trade, on the condition, however, that they retain the prerogatives attached to their order. In 1627, the nobles addressed a request to the King "to have a share and enter into trade without losing their privileges." A year later, when a Company was formed to establish settlements in the West Indies, the king gave all noble persons, of whatever quality, ecclesiastics, officers and others, permission to enter the said Company, without thereby derogating from the privileges granted to their orders.[91]

91

Letters of nobility were to be given to those who, without being gentlemen, would contribute their talent to the success of the enterprise. An ordinance, issued in 1629, generalized what seemed to be only a particular case. This ordinance, after establishing a distinction between large and small trade, declared that gentlemen engaged in banking and commerce would be subject to the taille (Tax). It regulated matters relating to maritime trade in an article worded as follows: "To invite our subjects, of whatever quality and condition they may be, to engage in trade and traffic by sea, and to make known that our intention is to raise up and honor those who will engage in it; We order that all gentlemen who, through them or through intermediaries, enter into the vessels, goods and merchandise of these, shall not deviate from nobility, without however being able to sell in retail." This measure had the very great merit of introducing, into maritime and colonial affairs, an active, vigorous, bold personnel, extremely suitable for achieving the goal pursued by the cardinal.

At the death of Louis XIII, which occurred in May 1643, a few months after that of his minister, the maritime situation of France testified brilliantly to the efforts of the cardinal and the success of his enterprise. The French flag flew with honor on all the seas. We had ports, arsenals, foundries, personnel specially intended for the navy, and vessels in a state to sail and fight. The merchant navy, which had been the object of the cardinal's particular attention, had taken off rapidly. France had establishments in the Antilles, in Florida, in Canada, on the coasts of Africa and in Madagascar. Colonization had received a very lively impulse in all these places.[92]

92

In replacing the Admiral of France under the title of Grand Master Chief and Superintendent of Navigation and Commerce, the Cardinal had not obeyed a feeling of vulgar ambition. The interest of France, over whose destiny he presided, had been the sole motive of his conduct. When this great minister died, his work was not completed, but in the organization he left behind, it is easy to recognize the principles that later served as the basis for Colbert's institutions.

II

During the early years of Anne of Austria's regency, the navy played a very honorable role. The Duke of Brézé, at the head of twenty-four ships, encountered the Spanish on August 9, 1643, off the coast of Barcelona; he attacked them and captured five ships. In a second encounter which took place on September 3, the enemy suffered further losses. The Spanish, greatly weakened by these two defeats, remained for several years without undertaking anything at sea. In the month of June 1646, the Duke of Brézé was cruising off Orbitello to cover the siege of this place, from the sea, with forty-five ships including twenty galleys and ten fire ships, when the enemy was reported. The admiral, Don Francisco Diaz Pimienta, had under his command twenty-five vessels, thirty galleys and eight fire ships. After a very lively fight, the Spanish admiral, although he had the advantage in numbers, abandoned the battlefield to us.[93]

93

The Duke of Brézé, having met a glorious death in this battle, Mazarin appointed as his successor the true leader of the fleet, Commander Des Gouttes. In 1647 and 1653, the French squadrons, under the command of Marshal de la Meilleraye, the Duke of Richelieu, and the Duke of Vendôme, successfully supported the operations of French troops in Spain and Italy. The troubles of the Fronde ruined this nascent navy. The position of Superintendent General of Navigation and Commerce, first taken by the Queen at the instigation of Mazarin, who did not dare to retain it, was given in 1650 to the House of Vendôme. The monarchy once again found itself deprived of the authority necessary to direct naval affairs. In our ports, where complete abandonment reigned, we had about thirty vessels, among which there were only three vessels of sixty to seventy guns. The arsenals were left in destitution, the ships afloat decayed, and no new construction was undertaken. The personnel, as neglected as the equipment, disappeared or was diverted from its intended purpose. When royal authority was reestablished, Mazarin gave some attention to the navy, whose services were necessary to fight the Spanish. The attempts made at that time to reorganize our naval forces were not pursued with sufficient vigor to achieve any serious results.

Colbert, appointed Intendant of finances in 1661, found the treasury empty and the revenues of several years spent in advance. Thanks to the order he brought to the organization of the services for which he was responsible, Louis XIV was able, in 1662, to give five million to the King of England, Charles II, to buy Dunkirk. Work was immediately undertaken to fortify this place and dig a basin between the town and the citadel.[94]

94

In 1663, Colbert, appointed Intendant of the Navy, was given, while retaining financial responsibility, the management of the Navy Department, for which de Lyonne, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, remained nominally responsible. Colbert considered in all its scope the conditions to which the creation of a large maritime establishment was subject. To achieve this result, it was necessary to expand the existing arsenals, build new ones, gather supplies, gather workers, build a fleet suited to France's situation, train, which presented serious difficulties, a corps of officers, call seafarers to serve on state vessels, establish order in financial management and strict discipline among personnel. Once this plan was finalized, Colbert pursued its execution with a perseverance and obstinacy that nothing could discourage. The development of the navy then resumed its march. Colbert had the honor of completing or, to speak more precisely, of making his own the work of Richelieu. The first armaments made after the death of Mazarin were directed against the Barbary pirates. During the year 1663, two squadrons received the mission of destroying the corsairs of the regencies of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli. The following year, the Duke of Beaufort, having left Toulon at the beginning of July, headed for the coasts of Algeria with sixteen vessels, eight galleys, twelve cargo ships and twenty-five small vessels carrying provisions and equipment. Seven galleys from Malta had ranged themselves under his flag. Expeditionary troops were embarked on the squadron. After landing at Bougie on July 21, the fleet arrived off Djijelly on the 22nd. The Duke of Beaufort had orders to seize this point, which the French government intended to occupy permanently.[95]

95

The troops, put ashore under the protection of ships and galleys, entered the city after a very fierce battle. The Duke of Beaufort set sail on October 27 with the bulk of the squadron. A few days after his departure, the army, having suffered fairly serious losses in an encounter with the Arabs, appeared very discouraged. The generals, meeting in Council, were unanimous in declaring that circumstances demanded the abandonment of Djijelly. The Marquis de Martel having anchored off the city with six ships, the troops embarked on his squadron on the night of October 3. A deplorable event marked the end of this expedition. A transport ship, carrying several hundred soldiers, sank within sight of Marseille; Only a very small number of men were saved. In 1665, the Duke of Beaufort made a new campaign on the north coast of Africa. On his return, he received orders to keep his squadron ready to go to the Ocean.

Louis XIV having decided to unite with Holland, then at war with Great Britain, the Duke of Beaufort set sail from Toulon at the end of April 1666, with a squadron of thirty ships and ten fire ships. Arriving in the last days of May on the coast of Portugal, he established himself on a cruise, in accordance with the orders of the Court, to protect the navigation of Duquesne, charged with taking Mlle d'Aumale to Lisbon. The departure of the future Queen of Portugal having been delayed, new instructions ordered the Duke of Beaufort to anchor at the entrance to the Tagus. At the end of July, fearing a shortage of provisions, he set sail for La Rochelle, where he anchored on August 23. The Dutch had not waited for us, and their fleet, commanded by Ruyter, had given battle to the English on June 11 and August 4.[96]

96

The Duke of Beaufort, after being rallied by Duquesne, set sail to join our allies. It had been agreed that the States fleet would meet the French as far as the entrance to the North Sea. Arriving off Dieppe, the Duke of Beaufort learned that the Dutch had entered the Texel; crossing the Channel again, he reached the port of Brest. In June 1667, Ruyter set sail with sixty-nine vessels; after destroying the settlements at Catham, he sailed up the Thames to Gravesend and shook London. In the spring of 1667, a truce, soon followed by peace, was concluded between France and Great Britain. Since 1663, Colbert, as we have said, had directed the navy with the title of Intendant; appointed, in 1669, Secretary of State, he had, in this capacity, in his attributions, commerce and the navy, which the king withdrew from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, finance, public works and fine arts. A man, even of great value, would have succumbed under the weight; it would have been necessary to be Colbert to carry it.

At the beginning of the year 1669, Louis XIV made the determination to rescue the Venetians besieged by the Turks in Candia. On June 7, the Duke of Beaufort set sail from Toulon with sixteen vessels, ten fire ships and about twenty transports. M. de Vivonne had left a few days earlier with thirteen galleys. Eight thousand men, commanded by General de Navailles, had taken passage on the expedition's ships. On the 19th, all the forces under the command of the Duke of Beaufort, with the exception of the galleys, anchored off Candia. The troops landed immediately and a general attack on the enemy camp was decided upon. Twelve hundred men, taken from the crews and marines, were put ashore.[97]

97

The squadron's commander-in-chief, the Duke of Beaufort, had refused to cede to anyone the honor of leading them into battle. On June 25, our troops, vigorously led, overthrew everything they found before them; after a few hours of fighting, they had captured the enemy's main positions. The French generals considered themselves certain of success when an unexpected event changed the face of things. A tremendous explosion occurred in a Turkish battery we had captured; a powder and grenade depot had caught fire. The soldiers, believing they were walking on mined ground, fled in panic. The Turks, who were in full retreat, noticing the disorder reigning in our ranks, returned to the charge. The Duke of Beaufort, indignant, threw himself upon the enemy with a handful of men; he was killed, as were most of those who accompanied him.

A few days later, the ships of the squadron and the galleys took up position near the coast. All these vessels opened a very lively fire on the Turkish camp; during this cannonade, the only result of which was to kill a few men of the enemy, one of our ships, the *Thérèse*, exploded. We had been imprudent enough to bring a supply of canisters into the battery. The boats of the squadron, immediately put to sea, picked up barely a few men. M. de Navailles, having renewed, without success, the attempt of June 25, decided to re-embark. The general of the galleys, M. de Vivonne, who had become commander-in-chief of the squadron following the death of the Duke of Beaufort, brought the ships and troops back to Toulon. The body of the Duke of Beaufort not having been found, the rumor spread in Paris that the prince was a prisoner.[98]

98

This version was not accepted at Court, and the king, on November 12, 1669, appointed him Grand Master of Navigation and Commerce. The admiralty, abolished in 1626 by Richelieu, was reinstated, but this dignity, reserved for the sons of France, was now nothing more than an honorary distinction.

Since France had concluded peace with Spain in 1659, our navy had fought only the Barbary pirates; a more serious test awaited the squadrons created by Colbert. At the beginning of 1672, Louis XIV joined forces with England against Holland. On May 13, Count d'Estrées rallied the forces commanded by the Duke of York in the harbor of Saint Helena, off Portsmouth. A few days later, eighty vessels, including thirty French vessels, headed for the coast of Holland. On June 29, the allies found themselves in the presence of the enemy; as the day drew to a close, the commander of the combined army thought it prudent to postpone the attack until the following day. A very thick fog enveloped the two fleets during the night; when it dissipated on the morning of the 30th, the Dutch were out of sight. The Duke of York anchored at Southwood Bay, about thirty leagues north of the mouth of the Thames. The general direction of the anchorage was north and south. The three squadrons of the Anglo-French army were arranged in the following order: the French squadron forming the vanguard, then, going back north, the main body and the rearguard. On June 7, at daybreak, the frigates signaled the fleet of the States-General. The Dutch were steering towards Southwood Bay with a light northeast breeze; arriving a short distance from land, they held to the wind, tacks to port, and they extended our line from north to south, cannonading it.[99]

99

The allies, surprised, hastened to set sail; some ships cut their cables, others left part of their boats ashore. The main body, which was under the direct orders of the Duke of York, and the rearguard, commanded by the Earl of Sandwich, took the starboard tack. Ruyter, with the first squadron, and one of his lieutenants, Admiral van Gent, with the third, followed the movement of the English. The commander of the Dutch vanguard, Admiral Bankaert, continued his route south, heading towards the French who had taken the port tack upon setting sail. Having arrived within cannon range, he opened fire on our ships, but he did not approach our line, although he was to windward and, consequently, free to choose the distance at which he wanted to fight. The engagement between the Dutch, led by Admirals Ruyter and Gent, and the English, was very lively. The ships of the two nations mingled, and on both sides there were ships completely disabled. The Duke of York, obliged to abandon his ship, the *Royal-Prince*, successively raised his flag on the *Saint-Michel* and the *London*. The *Royal-Jacques*, of one hundred guns, which was mounted by the Earl of Sandwich, commander of the third squadron, was set on fire by a fireship. Ruyter's ship, the United Provinces, suffered very serious damage. In the evening the Dutch held the wind and the firing ceased along the whole line. Admiral Bankaert made way to rejoin the main body of his fleet, and Count d'Estrées maneuvered to rally the Duke of York. English and French vessels, under-wind at the time of sailing, had taken only an insignificant part in the combat; some, due to the distance, had not fired a cannon shot.[100]

100

After remaining face to face, during the day of June 8, the two fleets separated; Ruyter returned to the Texel and the Duke of York brought his ships back to English ports. Before attempting a new encounter, both fleets had to undergo major repairs. Some writers have claimed that Louis XIV had ordered Vice-Admiral d'Estrées to spare his ships. If there is no evidence to support this assertion other than the conduct of our squadron, history must dismiss this accusation. With the winds blowing from the northeast, the combined fleet could not form up with its tacks to starboard immediately after setting sail. The third squadron and those ships of the first, which preceded the *Royal-Prince*, could, on the condition that the proximity of land allowed them, position themselves by an arrival movement on the front of this vessel. As for the ships of the first squadron which were behind the *Royal-Prince* and all the ships of the second, they were obliged to rise to windward to take up their positions. Vice-Admiral d'Estrées took the tack to port with the intention of tacking out to sea, then turning to join the Duke of York. The enemy did not give him time to execute this maneuver; he was attacked before having changed tack; as soon as the affair began, the Count d'Estrées no longer had freedom of movement. If the Dutch did not press him further, it is not to him that we should ask an account. We have not yet found any fact which gives the right to affirm that the commander of our squadron received the order to spare his ships. On the other hand, the French occupied, all day long, the Dutch vanguard which represented a third of the fleet of the States General.[101]

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As a result, each of the three squadrons of the combined army fought a number of enemies proportionate to its strength. How, then, can it be said that we allowed our allies to be crushed? Should we examine the hypothesis of an agreement between the governments of France and Holland, as a result of which Admiral Bankaert did not press us very hard? This does not seem very serious. It would have been necessary to let in on the secret, in addition to Louis XIV and the Dutch government, Ruyter, his two squadron leaders, d'Estrées and his lieutenants, Duquesne and de Rabesnière-Treslebois. Finally, do we believe that, under any government whatsoever, there are many generals willing to sacrifice their honor to the demands of politics.

Count d'Estrées wrote to the minister that several captains had not done all in their power to approach the enemy; among the officers of whom he complained was Lieutenant General Duquesne. On the other hand, it was learned in Paris that malicious rumours about our navy were circulating in England. Political figures, enemies of the French alliance, were attacking with great vigour the role played by our squadron. The latter, it was said, had displayed no vigour in the engagement it had sustained against the Dutch. Of the ships that composed it, some had not fired a cannon shot and others had fought from a great distance. People in Versailles were upset by these accusations and explanations were requested from Count d'Estrées. The Marquis de Croissy, French ambassador to London, was ordered to gather all information likely to enlighten the king on the conduct of the generals and captains of the fleet.[102]

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The ambassador went to Chatham where our ships were anchored. He soon realized that he was entrusted with a difficult mission. The officers were divided into two camps, some supporting d'Estrées and the others Duquesne. The information he obtained was so contradictory that he was unable to discern the truth. To fully understand the various incidents of June 7, as far as we are concerned, we must apply to the French squadron the reasoning we used above for the combined army. By keeping close to the wind, on port tack, immediately after having weighed anchor, the ships of Count d'Estrées were obliged, in order to get into line, to form up on the ship with the most to wind, that is to say on the *Téméraire*, leader of the first division. The winds being in the north-east, the ships taking the closest, on the tacks to port, steered to the east-southeast. It will be remembered that the squadron was anchored on a line running from north to south; we must add that the land would not have hindered the immediate formation of a line of battle, on the tacks to port, since the coast of England, at the height of Southwood-bay, runs to the north-east. Now, the *Saint-Philippe*, carrying the flag of the commander-in-chief, kept the wind. The ships that were to the north of this vessel could position themselves in its waters, letting it bear away, but those that were to the south were condemned to remain under the lee of the line until they had gained enough ground to the east to take up their posts. This explains why the main body of the French squadron and especially the rearguard, the latter commanded by squadron leader Rabesnières-Treslebois, took part immediately in the combat, while the vanguard, under the orders of Duquesne, only arrived on the battlefield in the afternoon. This delay was the consequence of the sudden appearance of the Dutch and the maneuver of Count d'Estrées.[103]

103

The latter fought very bravely and approached the enemy as closely as he could, but his conduct was that of a captain and not an admiral. Instead of facilitating the formation of his squadron, he was only concerned with getting upwind. The disagreement that arose between Duquesne and d'Estrées took on such proportions that it was recognized in Paris that it was impossible to leave these two general officers in each other's presence. Colbert, who knew Duquesne, was convinced that he had done his duty, but, on the other hand, Vice-Admiral d'Estrées had a very high position at Court; moreover, his ship had fought well, and he himself had won the sympathies of the English officers. The king decided that Duquesne would not be employed during the 1673 campaign. We have dwelt on the affair of Southwood Bay with the dual aim of combating a historical error and of showing the French navy at work, the first time it appeared on a major stage. Although the role of our squadron, on June 7, 1672, had been very inconspicuous, the mind remains struck by the importance of the results obtained by Colbert in a few years. We realize the amount of effort that the arming of these thirty vessels and the composition of their staffs cost the great minister.

In 1673, the North Sea was the scene of new battles between the allies and the Dutch. The two enemy fleets met on June 7 and 15 and on August 21. On June 7, the French squadron, which formed the main body of the battle that day, showed a vigor to which the English paid public homage; the affair of June 15 was a simple cannonade, but on August 21, the fighting was very serious.[104]

104

New, and one might say interminable, discussions arose at the end of the campaign; they recalled those of the previous year and were of no greater significance. On August 21, there had been no unity in the maneuvering of the Anglo-French fleet. Prince Rupert, who had replaced the Duke of York in command of the army, complained about his two lieutenants, Rear-Admiral Spragge and Count d'Estrées. These two general officers protested very strongly against the reproaches addressed to them, and they, in turn, accused Prince Rupert of having maneuvered with his own squadron without concern for the other two. Count d'Estrées also had quarrels with his own officers. In the report he sent to Paris on the battle of 21 August, he criticized with extreme severity the conduct of the lieutenant-general, Marquis de Martel, who had replaced Duquesne in command of the first division of the squadron. Less fortunate than his predecessor, the Marquis de Martel did not get out of the situation by the loss of his command; he was put in the Bastille where he remained until February of the following year. An investigation into the battle of 21 August, carried out by M. de Seuil, Intendant of the navy at Brest, led to no results. This was the very natural pitfall of this kind of information having no other basis than private conversations or unofficial interrogations. On the other hand, to what competent judge should the conduct of the commander-in-chief and the disputes that arose between him and his lieutenants be submitted? Not only did Vice-Admiral d'Estrées have no superior in the navy apart from the minister, but he had no equal. Behind him came two lieutenant-generals, Duquesne and the Marquis de Martel; now, the first was in disgrace and the second in the Bastille. Colbert did not have regular means of information at his disposal; he had to see and judge everything.[105]

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These considerations demonstrate the extent of the task this great minister had set himself, and the merit he had in fulfilling it: they also allow us to say that the reports of the Intendants, when they relate to purely maritime matters, have no authority.

From the study of the battles fought against the Dutch by the allies in 1672 and 1673, it emerges that, in the English fleet as in ours, the senior personnel were not up to their duties; there were, without a doubt, exceptions, but they were few in number. The battle formation, whether indicated in advance or signaled after the departure, is not the object of any attention on the part of the admirals and captains, and the army arrives in disorder before the enemy. The commander-in-chief does not direct his three squadrons any more than he directs the main body, placed under his direct command; the same is true of the general officers commanding the second and third squadrons. Once the combat is engaged, the admirals, who are keen to set an example, have no other concern than to fight well; they hasten to fire the ship on which their flag flies, but they do nothing to facilitate the maneuvering of the vessels which must be in line with their own ship. The system of signals, then very imperfect, makes, moreover, the transmission of orders difficult. Each captain, finding himself left to his own devices and having only a very limited knowledge of the maneuvers he is required to execute, acts according to his own inspiration. It is no longer a combat, but a mêlée in which we see ships changing not only position, but squadron. This state of affairs is not surprising. Experienced admirals and captains would have had difficulty maintaining such numerous fleets in good order.[106]

106

Now, who, at that time, was called upon to lead them? Let us leave aside the English and consider only our fleet. Its commander, Count d'Estrées, was a former lieutenant-general, having abandoned the army for the navy; appointed Vice-Admiral of the Ponant, upon his return from a campaign in America, he had been placed, after a few years of service, at the head of a squadron numbering nearly thirty vessels. What personal influence could he exert on the maneuvering of his army? None, obviously. Count d'Estrées was brave, audacious, but these qualities were not sufficient for the role he had to play; it was therefore some subordinate, without responsibility, who gave orders through the voice of the commander-in-chief. The vanguard and rearguard were well commanded on June 7, 1672, but after this incident the squadron found itself deprived of the services of Lieutenant-General Duquesne and Squadron Leader Rabesnière-Treslebois. The latter had died from a wound received in the battle of Southwood Bay; he enjoyed an excellent reputation for professional ability and bravery. There were, among the captains, officers of the greatest distinction, such as Forant, Tourville, Gabaret and a few others, but most of those who commanded the vessels, having recently entered the navy, did not have the experience necessary to perform their duties well. This situation was coming to an end; the time was not far off when the French navy would count, in its ranks, a large number of capable general officers and experienced captains. Inferior in number, having, in general, smaller vessels than those of the allies and less able to withstand the wind, as a result of their construction, the Dutch had repelled, and sometimes with advantage, the attacks of the combined fleet.[107]

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Ruyter's incomparable skill had undoubtedly played a large part in this result, but one must also note the understanding existing between the commander-in-chief and his lieutenants. The latter, constantly keeping in mind the goal pursued, made every effort to achieve it; there was a unity of vision between Ruyter and the general officers who commanded the vanguard and the rearguard. The latter, in turn, gave the ships placed under their command a faithfully followed direction, whenever circumstances permitted. In summary, the Dutch fleet showed more cohesion and was better maneuvered than that of the allies. Although the results of the battles fought with the Dutch during the years 1672 and 1673 had been indecisive, Ruyter, by the very fact that he had managed to hold his own against the naval forces of France and England, had made any attempt at landing on the coasts of Holland impossible, which would have led to the total ruin of the republic, a result which did the greatest honour to the navy of the United Provinces. The enemies of the French alliance having won in the Councils of Charles II, the Treaty of Westminster, signed on 16 February 1674, put an end to the war between Holland and England. The latter power took advantage of this circumstance to assert its claims. Its flag was to be saluted by Dutch ships throughout the seas surrounding the British Isles. France remained at war with Holland, which was joined by Spain. In 1674, the Dutch made some incursions on our coasts, but without success. Ruyter, sent to the Antilles, tried to seize Martinique, but was repulsed.[108]

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BOOK V

Sicilian Expedition. Battle of February 10, 1675. - Affairs of Barletta and Reggio. Capture of Agosta. Departure of Duquesne for Toulon. - Arrival in Sicily of a Dutch squadron commanded by Ruyter. - Battles of Stromboli and Agosta. - Death of Ruyter. - The Spanish-Dutch fleet is defeated before Palermo. - The French evacuate Sicily. - A Spanish ship is burned in the port of Barcelona. - Battles fought by squadron leader de Châteaurenault. - D'Estrées recaptures Cayenne and Tobago from the Dutch. - Shipwreck of the squadron on the Avès Islands. - Peace Treaty of Nijmegen.

I

Sicily impatiently endured the Spanish yoke. In 1673, the revolting inhabitants of Messina asked Louis XIV for help and, above all, food; blocked by the Spanish, they were threatened with famine. Six ships, under the command of Squadron Leader de Valbelle, entered the port of Messina with a few vessels laden with wheat. Squadron Leader de Valbelle, having returned to Toulon, set sail on December 18, 1674, escorting a new convoy. On January 1, at the entrance to the Strait of Messina, he sighted a Spanish squadron, comprising twenty ships and galleys. After remaining twenty-four hours under observation, the enemy making no maneuvers which indicated the intention of attacking it, the squadron leader de Valbelle set sail, during the night of January 2 to 3, and anchored at Messina with his convoy.[109]

109

The Duke of Vivonne, appointed Viceroy of Sicily, left Toulon on January 10, 1675, with nine ships and transports carrying troops and supplies. The squadron was between the Lipari and Stromboli islands on February 10 when sails were sighted. It was the Spanish fleet, nineteen ships and nineteen galleys strong, steering ours. Although the battle seemed very unequal, our ships prepared to fight. The Duke of Vivonne, head of the fleet, was in the center, Lieutenant-General Duquesne commanded the vanguard, and Squadron Leader Preuilly d'Humières the rearguard. The enemy's main effort was directed against our vanguard, which defended itself with extreme vigor. The battle continued without disadvantage for the French, despite their numerical inferiority, when the six ships of squadron leader de Valbelle were reported. The Spanish then covered themselves with sail and moved away. Lieutenant-General Duquesne, without waiting for orders from the commander-in-chief, pursued the enemy with his division, which was joined by two of the ships that had left Messina. After a cannonade that lasted several hours, Duquesne, recalled by the Duke of Vivonne, rallied the squadron with a forty-four-gun ship, the *Madona del popolo*. The following day, February 12, the Duke of Vivonne anchored in the port of Messina.

In March, three ships from Toulon, under the command of Lieutenant-General d'Almeiras, joined our squadron. Having received this reinforcement, the Duke of Vivonne set his flag on the *Sceptre* and put to sea with the intention of burning the Spanish squadron in the port of Naples, where it had withdrawn after the battle of February 11. Abandoning his plan, before even seeing the port of Naples, the Duke returned to Messina.[110]

110

Captain de Tourville, writing to M. de Seignelay, said on this subject: "I believe that M. de Vivonne will have told you how fortunate he was to find, during a calm, several boats laden with wheat, otherwise the murmurs of the people of Messina would have been great." Two ships, the *Sirène* and the *Téméraire*, captained by de Tourville and de Léry, were sent to the Adriatic to oppose the passage of German troops who were to embark at Trieste to go to Italy and from there reach Sicily. The two captains learned that the Germans, who had landed at Pescara, south of Ancona, had been put ashore north of the Phare. The three ships that had transported them were anchored, under the cannon of a fort, in the port of Barletta, located in the Gulf of Manfredonia. Captains de Tourville and de Léry decided to attack them. Approaching Barletta during the night, they anchored, at daybreak, at half cannon range of these vessels, including a Venetian ship of fifty and two Spanish frigates. After a vigorous cannonade, four boats commanded by M. de Coëtlogon, boarded, under fire from the fort and the enemy ships, the Venetian ship and quickly captured it. M. de Coëtlogon then headed towards a Spanish frigate, cut its moorings and took it out to sea. The third ship was captured and burned during the night. This affair, conducted with as much skill as vigor, did the greatest honor to the captains of the *Sirène* and the *Téméraire*, to M. de Coëtlogon and to several officers, among whom we must mention, as having particularly distinguished themselves, MM. des Gouttes and de Sillery.[111]

111

The two vessels and the prizes taken at Barletta had arrived in Messina when it was learned that the frigate *La Gracieuse*, Captain de Gossonville, had been carried off Reggio by the currents and had been captured, while calm, by Spanish galleys after a stubborn defense. *La Sirène*, *Le Téméraire*, and a fireship commanded by Captain Serpant put to sea on July 27, heading for Reggio. *La Sirène* and *Le Téméraire*, having broken down (stopped) and within short cannon range, opened fire on the forts while Captain Serpant headed for the frigate, accompanied by longboats commanded by Messrs. de Coëtlogon, des Gouttes, and de Sillery. The *Gracieuse*, boarded (touched on) by the fireship, was soon on fire; the fire, fueled by the offshore wind, affected about fifteen ships, then a powder magazine which, exploding, demolished part of the ramparts and set fire to several houses. When the French division moved away to return to Messina, the city was in flames. Among the private enterprises, carried out with a small number of vessels, few could be mentioned as having been more brilliantly conducted than the two expeditions we have just described. On August 17, the French squadron entered the port of Agosta by force; after extinguishing the fires of the batteries which defended access to the harbor, it disembarked the expeditionary force which seized the city. In October, Duquesne was sent to France with twenty ships to take on troops, supplies, and equipment. Shortly after his departure, fifteen Spanish ships and nine galleys came to anchor on the coast of Calabria. Lieutenant-General d'Almeiras left with eight ships, heading for the enemy. The Spaniards did not wait for him; they set sail, passed the lighthouse, and headed for Melazzo, followed by our squadron. During this chase, three of our ships, although all had local pilots, grounded; two were quickly refloated, but it took great effort to refloat the *Magnifique*, which the commander-in-chief was sailing.[112]

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As soon as his ship was seaworthy, Lieutenant-General d'Almeiras continued on his way and appeared off Melazzo, where the Spanish squadron had withdrawn; seeing that the latter was unwilling to come out to fight him, he returned to Messina.

The Dutch, by virtue of one of the clauses of the treaty that bound them to Spain, were obliged to come to the aid of that power at sea. Consequently, Ruyter had been sent to the coast of Sicily with a squadron that was to join the naval forces assigned by the Court of Madrid to fight the French and bring the island back to obedience. On January 2, 1676, Ruyter set sail from Melazzo with eighteen ships, six fireships and nine Spanish galleys, to meet the squadron commanded by Duquesne. He intended to fight it before it had joined up with ten ships remaining in Sicily. On January 7, the two fleets met, not far from the islands of Stromboli and Salini. Ruyter had eighteen ships and nine galleys, and Lieutenant-General Duquesne had twenty ships. The Dutch, who were to windward, did not think it appropriate to attack us. During the night, Duquesne, skillfully taking advantage of the variations that occurred in the breeze, found himself, the next day, January 8, to windward of the Dutch. The two squadrons, running on starboard tack, with westerly winds, the French let bear, in good order, on the enemy. Around ten o'clock, the fight was engaged along the whole line. Our vanguard was commanded by squadron leader Preuilly d'Humières, and the rearguard by squadron leader Gabaret. Duquesne, with the vanguard and the main body, pressed the enemy, who gave way as we approached.[113]

113

Our third squadron not imitating the commander-in-chief's maneuver, there came a moment when the Dutch rearguard found itself in the waters of the line formed by our vanguard and the main body. An officer, sent by Duquesne, transmitted to squadron leader Gabaret the order to follow the movement of the two squadrons preceding the one he commanded. The last ship in the center of our fleet, temporarily compromised, was promptly freed. The resulting calm prevented the French from taking advantage of their advantages; the Dutch rearguard could not be surrounded. The firing ceased at nightfall. As the calm continued, the Spanish galleys took the most battered Dutch vessels in tow. The fighting had been fierce, and in both squadrons there were ships seriously damaged. The Dutch ship, the *Frène*, sank a few days after the incident of January 8. Our squadron had 400 men out of action. Captain Villeneuve-Ferrières, and the fireship captains de Beauvoisis and de la Galissonnière had been killed; Duquesne, squadron leaders de Valbelle and Gabaret, and Captain de Cou were among the wounded.

The French squadron had gained an advantage that could not be contested. The Dutch fleet had slipped away, thus showing that it could not achieve the goal for which it had put to sea. The road to Messina was open, and our squadron was given complete freedom to join up with the ten ships of Lieutenant-General d'Almeiras; This junction was made on the 10th, in sight of the Dutch who, due to a change in the breeze, had the advantage of the wind over us. Thus, the French, under the orders of Duquesne, had beaten the Dutch commanded by Ruyter.[114]

114

Now, Holland was considered, at that time, the leading maritime power in Europe. If Duquesne had emerged victorious from the encounter of January 8, it was not only due to his conduct on the day of the battle, but also to the sustained attention with which he directed the squadron's training. Of a very firm character, having great experience in command and gifted with a natural disposition to exercise it, he demanded from the captains constant application to their duties. Watching with particular care that the ships kept their stations exactly in all circumstances of navigation, he did not fear to address just reprimands to the captains who deserved them. Duquesne knew very well that, when the day came to fight, good will, zeal and bravery would not be enough, if training did not join these qualities. Some captains still lacked the experience necessary to command ships. What had happened in the rearguard on January 8th was proof of this. As a result of collisions and false maneuvers, this squadron had taken, for part of the day, only a very small part in the combat. Duquesne cited, with praise, squadron leader de Valbelle, ship captains de Tourville, de Langeron, de Cou and de Léry. The commander-in-chief did not inform the minister of the names of the captains of whom he had to complain, but he warned them that "at the first fault in conduct and maneuver, he would immediately put another commander in place of the offender." At the same time that Lieutenant-General d'Almeiras effected his junction with our squadron, eight Spanish vessels joined the Dutch. The Prince of Montesarchio, who had taken command of the combined fleet, kept himself at a great distance from our squadron, although he was to windward, and, consequently, in a position to attack us.[115]

115

On the 11th, a very violent westerly gale separated the two fleets. The allies went to Palermo, and the French, after remaining on cruise for a few days, awaiting the enemy, headed for Messina, which they entered on January 22, to the acclamations of the inhabitants.

Two vessels, the *Apollon* and the *Joli*, belonging to the rearguard, had suffered serious damage when they collided during a maneuver, and both had left the fleet. A few days after this event, the *Apollon* reached Messina, where the *Joli* did not arrive until January 27. Reporting on this incident, Duquesne wrote to Colbert: "I will admit to you here, Monseigneur, that the officers and captains who have only served in the seas of the Levant are not intelligent in observing the orders of march and battle, as is proper, for lack of having practiced it and even, for not having this experience, they have difficulty approving it, which we recognize to be the advantage the Dutch have over us in sailing almost at all times, especially in the presence of the enemy, day and night in battle; also they avoid boarding each other, something to which one is too prone among the king's ships." Duquesne added that he would use due severity towards the captains "who were not attentive to the observation of the orders of march and battle". The Dutch fleet, after having repaired itself in Naples, returned to Palermo. The allies, having resolved to attack Messina by land and sea, the Hispano-Batavian fleet, commanded by Vice-Admiral Don Francisco Freire de la Cerda, put to sea. The Duke of Vivonne kept our ships in the port of Messina where he judged their presence necessary; understanding however that he could not leave the enemy free to stop the convoys expected from Toulon, he decided to set sail.[116]

116

The Duke of Vivonne had set sail on the *Sceptre*, commanded by de Tourville, and was himself on board when the people of Messina, informed of his impending departure, sent a deputation on board to urge him, with the utmost urgency, not to leave the city. The Duke, yielding, perhaps without difficulty, to these pressing requests, returned to land, delegating his powers to Lieutenant-General Duquesne, to the great satisfaction of the squadron's officers.

On April 22, the two fleets met. Lieutenant-General d'Almeiras commanded the vanguard and Squadron Leader Gabaret the rearguard. The French fleet consisted of thirty vessels, and two fire ships were attached to each of the three squadrons. The enemy had twenty-seven vessels, nine galleys and fire ships. Admiral Don Francisco Freire de la Cerda was in the center of his army; Ruyter commanded the vanguard and Vice-Admiral Haën the rearguard. The breeze was light and variable, and it was four o'clock when the two fleets found themselves in position to engage in combat. The enemy was to windward of our squadron. The vanguard, under Ruyter, let the wind bear away and came to a short distance from our second squadron, with which it engaged in a very lively fight. The Spanish admiral, far from following the movement of his vanguard, held the wind and exchanged a long-range cannonade with our ships. The Dutch Vice-Admiral Haën, commanding the rearguard, found himself, despite his desire to fight, obliged to remain in the waters of the commander-in-chief. Four dismasted vessels, belonging to the vanguard, were taken in tow by the Spanish galleys.[117]

117

These ships occupied a position in the battle line that placed them very close to the ship mounted by Ruyter. "This admiral," says Duquesne in his report, "then found himself poorly accompanied; he was forced to put the wind on his sails, to give way to the ships which were behind him, to join him, so that he fell across the *Saint-Esprit*, which was between the *Sceptre* and the *Saint-Michel*, from which ships he suffered such a heavy fire that he was obliged to tack under cover of the heavy smoke caused by the cannonades on both sides, and even of the darkness of the approaching night, otherwise he would undoubtedly have remained there, and it will be said, one day, that never have ships withdrawn in such a bad state." The commander-in-chief of the combined fleet, finally taking the decision to come to the aid of his vanguard, approached the French line. A very lively fight then began between the Dutch rearguard and ours, but the day was drawing on, and when night came, the firing ceased. The Hispano-Batavian army headed for Syracuse, the Spanish galleys having in tow the ships that had suffered the greatest damage. It must be acknowledged that the Spanish galleys played an extremely useful role; without their assistance, five or six ships belonging to the vanguard would, in all probability, have remained in our hands. Lieutenant-General d'Almeiras, the ship captains de Tambonneau and de Cou were among the dead, Ruyter was seriously wounded. On April 25, the French squadron appeared before Syracuse, but the Spanish admiral made no movement. Duquesne appeared again before this city on the 29th; it was a day of mourning for the allies and especially for the Dutch: Ruyter, that illustrious admiral, had just died from the effects of the wound he had received in the battle of Agosta.[118]

118

Ruyter was seventy years old. His body was brought back to Holland and buried, with great pomp, in Rotterdam. Louis XIV ordered that all French naval vessels, through which the ship carrying the remains of this great man passed, should salute with cannons. The Dutch and some Spanish officers loudly complained about the conduct of Admiral Don Francisco Freire de la Cerda on April 22. Although he had written to Madrid that the combined army had defeated the French, the truth reached the sovereign, and Admiral Don Diego de Ibarra was called to command the fleet. Don Francisco Freire de la Cerda refused to leave the fleet; He remained on the flagship as a volunteer, thus showing that, although he was a mediocre general, he had the soul of a soldier. Our squadron, after spending a few days in the port of Agosta, received orders from the Duke of Vivonne to return to Messina.

On April 22, the French squadron had maneuvered well and fought bravely; nothing more could be asked of it. The commander-in-chief, after expressing to the minister his satisfaction, cited, with particular praise, first the dead whose names we have already given, then Captain de Cogolin, who was among the wounded, and Captains de Léry, de Langeron, de Beaulieu, and de Lafayette. Duquesne also drew the minister's attention to the bravery and skill of the squadron leaders Preuilly d'Humières, de Valbelle and de Tourville, and of the ship captain Saint-Aubin d'Amfreville.[119]

119

Squadron Commander Gabaret and several captains had not been singled out for special mention; they formed a party of malcontents joined by a few good officers, headed by the Commander-in-Chief, Squadron Leader de Valbelle, who fought very well, but whose "pernicious and muddled" mind caused a great deal of harm. Duquesne, who had strong ideas on the need to establish very firm discipline in the army, wrote to Colbert: "I hope that, in a short time, His Majesty will have the satisfaction of seeing his navy in good standing, if he is pleased to purge it of a few muddled minds and other mercenaries who cause division within the corps." "Certain methods used by Colbert and Seignelay were not unrelated to the difficulties encountered by Duquesne in establishing strict discipline in the fleet. Seignelay was in correspondence with general officers and captains of the squadron. The letters he received and which his father read, being always written from a particular point of view, must rarely have presented the facts in their true light. Seignelay's correspondents, generally disposed to find good what they did, did not always profess the same feelings for the actions of their colleagues. Finally, could one count on an officer, having incurred a reprimand from his chief, judging him impartially? However perspicacious their perspicacity, Colbert and his son must often have been greatly hindered in discerning the truth. However, faced with the complaint made by Duquesne, whose position, as a result of his brilliant combats, was very solid, Colbert had no hesitation. Full satisfaction was given to the leader of the squadron. The minister informed de Valbelle that his conduct was causing him the greatest harm in the mind of the king, and, on the other hand, he wrote to Duquesne: "You must be assured that all the advice you give for the King's service will be carried out; above all, apply yourself to establishing obedience and regularity throughout the King's navy, and be certain that there is neither cabal nor writing that could cause you any harm in the mind of the King."[120]

120

II

The Hispano-Batavian fleet, after repairing, went to Palermo. The Duke of Vivonne, knowing that the King was dissatisfied with his inaction, resolved to attack the allied fleet in the port where it had withdrawn. M. de Vivonne set his flag on the *Sceptre*, which was manned by squadron leader de Tourville, and put to sea on May 28 with twenty-nine vessels, twenty-five galleys, and nine fireships. The vanguard was commanded by Lieutenant-General Duquesne, and the rearguard by Squadron Leader Gabaret. The galleys were under the command of Squadron Leaders de Labrossardière and de Manse. On May 31, the Duke of Vivonne arrived off Palermo. Squadron Leaders de Tourville and de Gabaret, Captain de Langeron and Major de Chaumont, passed in a felucca, within half cannon range of the enemy, and reconnoitered their position. The Hispano-Batavian fleet, consisting of twenty-seven vessels, nineteen galleys and four fire ships, was anchored in a semicircle off the bay. The Dutch formed the vanguard and rearguard; the Spanish were in the center; the galleys and fire ships had taken up positions in the intervals and on the wings.[121]

121

The right wing relied on the city fortifications, the center on the fortress of Castellamare, and a battery of ten guns, established on the pier that closed the harbor, was to join its fire with that of the left wing.

In accordance with the arrangements agreed upon at a Council of War, convened aboard the *Sceptre*, under the presidency of the Duke of Vivonne, Squadron Leader de Preuilly d'Humières set sail on June 2 with nine vessels, seven galleys, and five fireships, heading for the allied right wing. The vessels anchored less than a cable's length from the enemy, with whom they immediately engaged in a fierce battle. The fireships were then put into motion; Favored by the breeze blowing from the northeast, that is to say from the open sea, they quickly approached the enemy ships. Some vessels, about to be reached by the incendiary ships, cut their cables and drifted towards the land. The Duke of Vivonne then came to attack the center and the left wing of the Spanish-Dutch fleet; after an hour of fighting, disorder broke out in the enemy line. The Dutch vessel, *Steinberg*, which Rear-Admiral van Middellant was aboard, reached by a fireship, cut its cables and, drifting all in flames, fell on the vessels *Wryheid* and *Leyden*. The *Steinberg* blew up, covering with its debris and setting ablaze the vessels it had boarded. Two fireships hooked the flagship, *N.-D. del Pilar*, of seventy guns, which was set on fire; three other Spanish vessels suffered the same fate. The enemy vessels which were still fighting cut their cables and ran aground on the coast. Some were able to position themselves inside the mole, a position which sheltered them from the fire of our squadron. The enemy's losses were considerable.[122]

122

Seven ships, three Dutch and four Spanish, and two galleys were engulfed in flames; the allies counted more than two thousand men killed, wounded, or drowned. The commander-in-chief of the combined fleet, Don Diego de Ibarra, his predecessor, Don Francisco Freire de la Cerda, who, as mentioned above, had remained as a volunteer on the flagship, and de Ruyter's successor, Admiral de Haën, were among the dead. Admiral Middellant had drowned.

It is not entirely clear why the allies decided to meet the French attack at anchor. The experienced men commanding the Dutch could not have been unaware that the land batteries would be of very little assistance to them; On the other hand, the allies, by remaining at anchor, gave the French fleet full freedom to attack successively each part of their fleet with superior forces. We must therefore suppose that the Dutch, remembering the conduct of the Spanish in the previous battles, considered themselves, in advance, as beaten, if the encounter were to take place offshore. The combined fleet could have sheltered behind the mole which closed the port of Palermo, but this maneuver would have clearly shown that it refused to fight; now, the Dutch did not want, either in their country or in Spain, anyone to have the right to make this reproach to them. We must therefore suppose that Admiral Haën took the decision which seemed to him to involve the least risk. In fighting at the opening of the bay, the Dutch admiral probably thought that the mistreated vessels, having, with the help of the galleys, a safe haven in the port of Palermo, the fight, if it did not favor the allies, would remain undecided, the best result he was allowed to hope for. Neither he nor the Spanish admiral had foreseen the decisive role that the fireships were to play on the day of June 2.[123]

123

The *ville de Palerme* suffered great damage. The cannons of the burning ships fired cannonballs as they were hit by the fire, many of which fell into the city, destroying houses and killing people. In addition, "the grenades," says a contemporary account, "which were in quantity in these warships, rained down as thick as hail." The confusion resulting from this unfortunate situation was compounded by a popular uprising; the city was then the scene of the most serious disorders. As often happens in such cases, the inhabitants blamed the authorities for the misfortunes that befell them. The rebels, urgently demanding cannons to place in the port and fire on the French, were granted satisfaction. "The people," it is said in the report from which we quoted an extract above, "dragged eight pieces of cannon onto the walls, from where they began to fire on the enemies, who had sounded or otherwise anchored within sight of this town, not far from the range of the cannon, and remained there with as much peace as if they had been in their own houses." There was a moment of question of an attempt which would have completed the brilliant victory won on June 2; it was a question of burning the enemy buildings with transport ships, transformed into fire ships, and longboats, equipped with sulfur jackets. The position of the Dutch and Spanish ships, crowded behind the pier or beached on the coast, could, if successful, have led to the destruction of the combined fleet. The Duke of Vivonne did not consider it prudent to attempt this operation; satisfied with the results obtained, he returned to Messina.[124]

124

Duquesne was sent to Toulon, with thirty ships, to take on troops and supplies. Arriving at the Hyères Islands at the end of June, he set sail again a month later with twenty-four ships, leaving behind six vessels under the command of Squadron Leader Gabaret. The latter was to set sail immediately after embarking troops expected in Toulon. During the month of August, Duquesne anchored in the port of Messina, bringing three thousand infantry. During this last crossing, we had sighted, in plain sight, and fruitlessly pursued the Dutch squadron. The latter had left Sicily, bound for Naples where, in accordance with the orders of the States-General, it was to await reinforcements. In reality, Holland was giving up supporting the Spanish cause in Sicily; she was preparing to recall her fleet, finding that she had made enough sacrifices of men and money in favor of an ally incapable of any vigorous action in defense of its own interests. The naval forces of Spain being, following the departure of the Dutch, reduced to impotence, the only service that the French fleet could render was to cannonade some coastal places. Neither at Versailles nor at Madrid was anyone satisfied with the progress of affairs in Sicily. The Marquis of Villafranca, viceroy for Spain, and the Duke of Vivonne were both unable to undertake anything. The former did not have sufficient forces to seize the positions that we occupied, and the latter did not have enough troops to enter the campaign and conquer the island. The Duke of Vivonne, tired of the role imposed on him, obtained, at the end of 1677, a leave of absence which he had been requesting for some time already. We were at peace with England, but it was easy to see that, as the war continued, this power would join our enemies. If this eventuality arose, our situation in Sicily would become perilous.[125]

125

The successor of the Duke of Vivonne, Marshal Lafeuillade, received orders to bring the fleet back to France. The marshal left Messina in March 1678 on the Monarque, which was aboard Duquesne. Such was the end of an expedition that the government had undertaken without properly calculating the advantages and disadvantages, an expedition abandoned, in fact, almost as soon as it began, the Duke of Vivonne never having had enough troops to conquer Sicily. We were leaving, delivering, which was dishonorable for France, the inhabitants of Messina and our supporters on the island to the vengeance of the Spanish.

In the first days of May 1678, Duquesne put to sea with ten ships to support the operations of Marshal Navailles in Catalonia. On the 25th, the squadron appeared off Barcelona, where Duquesne believed he would find a Spanish-Dutch squadron. There was only one enemy ship at Barcelona; it was a Spanish vessel of fifty cannons. This one, immediately changing anchorage, went to place itself under the protection of the batteries of the port and the city. The order to attack it was given to the ships *Vaillant, Fleuron* and *Sans Pareil*, captained by Relingue, Montreuil and Hailly. Our ships dropped anchor, the *Vaillant* and *Fleuron* half a cable length from the Spanish ship, and the *Sans Pareil*, designated as support, a little behind the first two. The French vessels, maneuvering with extreme precision under heavy fire, mounted in such a way as to present a broadside to the enemy. These dispositions taken, the action began on both sides with great vigor. Duquesne, when he judged the moment favorable, signaled a fire ship, commanded by Captain Honnorat, to ram the Spanish vessel.[126]

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The breeze, coming from the open sea, favored this operation, which was executed with complete success; the enemy ship fell prey to the flames. The captains of the *Sans Pareil* and *Fleuron* were wounded; the former died a few hours after the end of the battle. Our losses in men were not very great, but the ships engaged had suffered fairly serious damage. This affair, which demonstrated great fortitude on the part of the captains, officers, and crews, had lasted five hours. Captain Honnorat, who had just distinguished himself at Barcelona, had boarded and burned the flagship of Spain at the Battle of Palermo. A reward was well due to him. The king granted him, in addition to a gratuity of two thousand crowns, a gold chain and a medal, which were presented to him in Toulon, in the presence of the naval officers serving in that port. After a demonstration made before Genoa, which, without breaking with us, favored, by all means in its power, the cause of Spain, Duquesne brought the squadron back to Toulon.

In the first days of July 1677, squadron leader Châteaurenault was cruising off Ushant with the fifty-gun ships, the *Bon*, which he was sailing, *Bourbon* and *Duc*, captained by Rosmadec and Sourdis, the forty-gun *Hardi*, captained by Job Forant, and three frigates. On the 12th, he became aware of a Dutch squadron heading north; This one, placed under the command of Captain Tobyas, was composed of eight vessels, having from forty to sixty cannons, and eight armed transports. Although the enemy was very superior to us, from the point of view of the number and strength of the vessels, de Châteaurenault resolved to attack him. The French division, which was to windward, let the ship sail and the action began with great firmness on both sides.[127]

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After several hours of fierce combat, the enemy, with the fog setting in, moved away and was soon lost from sight. The *Bon*, aboard from Châteaurenault, had attempted to board the ship of the commander of the Dutch squadron, but Captain Tobyas had thwarted all attempts to achieve this. Our frigates had captured four flutes, laden with guns. This battle reflected the greatest honor on the commander of our squadron and the captains under his command. On March 16, 1678, de Châteaurenault left Brest, heading for the Mediterranean with the ships, *Courtisan*, which he was riding, *Bon*, *Saint-Louis*, *Foudroyant*, *Invincible* and *Superbe*, captained by La Bretèche, Belle-Ile-Érard, La Motte, Belle-Fontaine, Réols, and three fire ships. On the 17th, at daybreak, a squadron, soon recognized as Dutch, was sighted. This squadron, which included eleven ships of sixty to eighty cannons, two frigates, five fire ships and some light vessels, was commanded by Admiral Evertzen. M. de Châteaurenault, despite the superiority of the enemy, decided to fight. The engagement, which began in the morning, lasted until the end of the day. Our ships were badly damaged, but the enemy ships had also suffered greatly. The next day, the Dutch were no longer in sight. The king, according to a letter from Colbert, was not satisfied with the results of this affair; he did not want to admit that, on land or at sea, the Dutch were fought without gaining a considerable advantage over them. The king and Colbert forgot that Châteaurenault and his captains, having fought eleven ships with six, had remained masters of the battlefield. To fail to praise such a bold action would be to be unfair to brave and skilled officers. [128]

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While the government was arming a squadron that it intended to send to the Caribbean Sea, the Dutch seized Cayenne and Tobago at the beginning of 1676; they made landings in our colonies, engaging in pillage and loading onto their ships everything they could carry. Vice-Admiral d'Estrées set sail from Brest in October with the fifty-gun ships, *Glorieux*, *Fendant*, *Précieux*, *Intrépide*, and *Marquis*, and the forty-gun ships, *Laurier*, and *Soleil d'Afrique*. These vessels were commanded by Captains de Méricourt, de Blénac, Mascarany, Gabaret jeune, de Lézine, Pannetier, and Grand-Fontaine. The commander-in-chief sailed the *Glorieux*. Arriving off Cayenne on December 8, Admiral d'Estrées made preparations to attack the Dutch. On the 17th, eight hundred men, sailors and soldiers, commanded by Captains de Blénac, Pannetier, and Grand-Fontaine, disembarked, protected by the ships' fire. The city was recaptured that same day.

Vice-Admiral d'Estrées, leaving Cayenne, went to Martinique and Guadeloupe; after taking troops from these two colonies, he headed for Tobago, where he hoped to outpace the Dutch. This hope was not realized. On his arrival, he found Vice-Admiral Binkes anchored off the town with ten vessels, several inferior ships, and a fireship. The harbor was difficult to access, and, moreover, once entered, one could only leave with the wind under the yards.[129]

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The Dutch admiral believed himself safe from any attack from the sea; nevertheless, he had made preparations in case the French, whose presence in the Antilles he knew, attempted to force their way into the harbor. His ships, arranged in a crescent, were supported by low-lying batteries established on land. The Dutch fleet thus occupied a very strong position; therefore, upon seeing the French squadron, the inhabitants, convinced that they would find absolute safety in the harbor, took refuge on the transport ships. The captains, assembled in Council, recognized the necessity of engaging the Dutch fleet in order to make the task assigned to the landing troops possible. The squadron set sail and headed for the harbor. The lead ship, the *Intrépide*, having touched a rock, the order was given to anchor. Admiral d'Estrées and his captains were animated by the most lively desire to triumph over the obstacles before them, but, frightened by the thought of throwing the squadron ashore, they decided that no attack by sea was possible. It remained to try their fortune on the land side. On February 21, 1677, the troops landed, but, inconvenienced by the fire of the Dutch vessels, they were forced to move away, and consequently found themselves unable to undertake anything against the city. Such was the state of affairs when a French boat seized a boat in which was a local pilot. The latter, questioned about the difficulties we might encounter in joining the Dutch fleet, gave a formal assurance that he would lead our ships into the harbor, without them running any risk, on the condition of being released as soon as his mission was completed. Count d'Estrées accepted this proposal and a simultaneous attack, by land and sea, was decided.[130]

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On March 3, the squadron, formed in convoy line, entered Tobago harbor without incident, under the direction of the pilot who had offered his services to Admiral d'Estrées. The fleet's leader, the Marquis, joined a Dutch vessel alongside. The flagship, the *Glorieux*, boarded the *Truininger* and captured it after a very fierce but short-lived battle. The French had just taken possession of the *Truininger* when flames were seen coming from inside the vessel. The fire spread with such violence that attempts to control it had to be abandoned; attempts were then made, but without success, to move the *Glorieux* away from its prize. The *Truininger* exploded, covering the vessels of both nations with its debris. Six Dutch vessels, as well as the transports, on which the unfortunate inhabitants had thought they would find safe refuge, fell prey to the flames. Three French vessels, the *Intrépide*, whose commander, Captain Gabaret, had been killed, the *Marquis* and the *Glorieux* were on fire; a fourth vessel, the *Précieux*, maneuvering to get away from these vessels, ran aground. Vice-Admiral d'Estrées and his flag captain, both wounded, left the *Glorieux* in a small boat seen drifting in the harbor, which a naval guard had swum to retrieve. On the three vessels, on board which the fire had broken out following the explosion of the *Truininger*, the greatest disorder reigned. The officers, judging these ships lost, sought their salvation in flight; they abandoned them without any concern for the men and especially the wounded they left behind. The captain of the *Précieux*, after having made useless efforts to get his ship back afloat, went to the commander-in-chief to inform him of his situation. D'Estrées, not wanting to leave one of his ships in the hands of the enemy, ordered him to deliver the *Précieux* to the flames.[131]

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Captain Mascarany, back on board, prepared to carry out the admiral's order, regardless of the wounded, but the crew's threatening attitude prevented him from doing so. We had been no more fortunate on land than at sea; our troops, repulsed by the Dutch, had suffered significant losses. Captain de Lapiogerie had been killed and Captain Grand-Fontaine was wounded. The squadron managed to leave the harbor by towing itself to jet anchors. Vice-Admiral d'Estrées reembarked the troops, went to Martinique where he dropped off the soldiers borrowed from that colony and Guadeloupe, and then returned to France. This campaign, the various events of which we have deliberately recounted, shows this nascent navy in its true light; it is brave, but inexperienced. Rules, order, and discipline have not yet taken deep root on board our ships, and there is no link between the general staff and the crews. The leaders do not seem to assume any other duty than to give, in all circumstances, an example of intrepidity; it is the ship captains who lead the men ashore into action. During the capture of Cayenne in December 1676, the three ship captains who marched at the head of the troops were wounded; at Tobago, two ship captains commanded the landing force; one was killed and the other wounded. In this last incident, all the officers, except two, were hit by enemy fire. When the events that had taken place in the Bay of Tobago became known in Paris, Colbert ordered an investigation into the conduct of the officers who, concerned for their personal safety, had abandoned their ships, leaving the crews without direction.[132]

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Colbert understood very well that the navy would only be powerful the day when shared dangers and mutual devotion established close solidarity between the staff and crews. Following this investigation, several officers were brought before a court martial. One of them, to whom the successive deaths of those who preceded him had given command of the *Intrépide*, was sentenced to death and another to the galleys; finally, a third, declared unworthy of inclusion in the marine corps, was dismissed from service.

The results of this campaign were far from satisfactory; we had lost four ships, a large number of men, and we had made no conquests. However, it was appropriate to put, in comparison with our losses, those that we had inflicted on the enemy. Now, Admiral Binkes, deprived of seven ships, could no longer undertake anything in the Antilles. The government decided that a new expedition would be directed towards Tobago; Admiral d'Estrées, who had command of it, was to, before going to the Antilles, seize some Dutch possessions on the west coast of Africa. The admiral left Brest on October 1, 1677, with eight ships and eight lower-ranking vessels. He took the islands of Arguin and Gorée, destroyed some Dutch establishments, then set sail for the Antilles. He arrived on December 7, off Tobago; there were only three ships in the harbor, the *Précieux*, relieved by the enemy, a Dutch vessel and a transport. Our squadron established itself in cruise at the entrance to the port to prevent these vessels from leaving. All means of action at the disposal of Admiral d'Estrées were brought together to attack the fort which defended the harbor; a thousand men, cannons and mortars were landed.[133]

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A few days later, the French, having carried out approach works and built batteries, opened fire. Two bombs had just been launched when the third, falling on the powder magazine, caused a tremendous explosion; nearly three hundred men were killed or wounded. The commander-in-chief, Vice Admiral Binkes, was among the dead. The French marched on the fort, which surrendered without resistance; the three Dutch ships that were in the harbor lowered their flag. This success, easily achieved, determined Admiral d'Estrées to attempt a new conquest; he resolved to take the island of Curaçao from the Dutch. The squadron was approaching its destination when, on 11 May 1678, at about nine o'clock in the evening, in dark weather, rifle shots and a cannon fired by buccaneering ships were heard from the bow of the flagship, the *Terrible*, which was marching at the head of the fleet. There was no doubt that the squadron was following a dangerous route; the *Terrible* then signaled to take tack to the other side. By sunset, all the ships had reduced their sails; they therefore had to restore them before being able to carry out the admiral's order. Precious time was thus lost; moreover, several ships, while manoeuvring to avoid collisions, deviated from the route that should have been followed to reach the open sea. Twelve ships touched the bottom; Five managed to free themselves, but the *Terrible* and six other vessels remained stranded on the reefs surrounding the Avès Islands and were demolished within a few days. This dramatic event cost France seven vessels and, in addition, eighty men, sailors and soldiers, who drowned during the rescue operations.[134]

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Once again, we are faced with the inexperience, from a maritime point of view, of the fleet's general staff. Admiral d'Estrées cannot control, either himself or through his officers, the calculations of his ship's pilots; it is the latter who, in reality, direct the course of his squadron, and even then, if we are to believe the memoirs of the time, the admiral does not always want to listen to them. Finally, these same pilots are inadequate to navigate the Caribbean Sea, at a time when charts are defective and navigation methods, based on astronomical observations, are very imperfect. Admiral d'Estrées appears to have realized the necessity of having a special pilot on board, but instead of looking for a sailor who presented all the desirable guarantees, he placed his trust, if we are to believe his flag captain, in a man who was not in the service of the navy and who had only very vague notions about the navigation that the squadron was to undertake. The islands of Avès were known; the buccaneers frequented these waters, and they often anchored in coves cut out in the middle of the reefs which surround these islands. We find proof of this in the following passage from a report addressed to the minister by Captain de Méricourt. "I asked," he wrote, "the buccaneers if they knew where we were; they told me that they did, that they came there often; and that, if they had known that the Vice-Admiral did not have any experienced people for that country, they would have offered to lead him; that experienced people are needed, and that one does not navigate in that country by the height; that the place where we were lost is called the reefs of Avès, that they cover more than fourteen leagues of country; that not a year goes by without ships being lost there, and that there are some whose crews one never hears about. " We see that Vice-Admiral d'Estrées, by addressing the buccaneers, would have had pilots, and an unprecedented disaster would have been avoided.[135]

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D'Estrées, bringing back the wreckage of his squadron, anchored in Brest harbor at the beginning of August. Ships sent by Colbert to the scene of the shipwreck to salvage the cannons and anchors successfully completed this mission. It was not only through inexperience that Admiral d'Estrées had driven his squadron onto the reefs of the Avès Islands. The time spent at sea since joining the navy had made him more confident, one might say more presumptuous, without making him more capable. He was recognized for his great bravery and audacity, but the fate of the ships under his command was left to chance. The disaster suffered by the American squadron undermined the legitimate consideration we had acquired in the battles fought against the Spanish-Dutch on the coast of Sicily. The naval officers believed that a disgrace, justly deserved, would punish Vice-Admiral d'Estrées for the faults he had committed. This was not the case; Colbert probably shrank from the influence of the Vice-Admiral's powerful family, and he kept his command.

Peace was concluded at Nijmegen on August 11, 1678, with Holland, and on September 11, with Spain.[136]

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BOOK VI

The *Sans-Pareil* and the *Conquérant* sink in the open sea. - Duquesne pursues the Tripolitanian corsairs. - Algiers is bombarded in 1682 and 1683. - Death of Colbert. - His work. - Seignelay is appointed Minister of the Navy. - Bombardment of Genoa. - Expedition against the Barbary pirates. - Question of salutes in encounters at sea. - Combat between Tourville and Vice-Admiral Papachin. - Death of Duquesne.

I

An event occurred in the year following the conclusion of peace that we must mention because it relates to the state of the navy at that time. Tourville, whose brilliant services had brought him to prominence, took command in the spring of 1679 of a division of four vessels with which he hunted down the Majorcan corsairs; they were stopping our merchant ships, although France was at peace with Spain. After a summer campaign devoted to this service, Tourville received the order to go to Rochefort with his four vessels, the *Sans-Pareil*, which he was sailing, the *Conquérant*, the *Content* and the *Arc-en-Ciel*, captained by de Chabert, d'Amfreville and de Coëtlogon. A flute, loaded with powder, which accompanied the squadron, having signaled a leak off Lisbon, Tourville entered the Tagus to carry out the repairs required by the state of this vessel.[137]

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The division returned to sea at the end of September. The *Sans-Pareil* being an old vessel whose artillery was wearing heavily, Tourville, as a precautionary measure, as the season drew on, had eighteen guns lowered into the hold and the ship braced with rigging. On October 21, with the wind blowing from the southwest in a storm, the four vessels fled before the weather; the *Sans-Pareil* then had only the *Arc-en-Ciel* alongside it. The first of these vessels successively lost its bowsprit, foremast, and mainmast; it split open, and it was soon recognized that it was impossible to keep it afloat. Boats carrying eighty men were able to reach the *Arc-en-Ciel*, but as soon as this operation was completed, these boats were abandoned by the men who were on them. There was then no other recourse than to reach this vessel by swimming; Tourville was able to reach a small boat that the *Arc-en-Ciel* had managed to put to sea. The *Sans-Pareil* sank, and its crew, with the exception of about one hundred men, disappeared with the vessel. The *Conquérant* had suffered the fate of the *Sans-Pareil*; it had sunk at sea. A few men, thrown ashore on wrecks, had made this new misfortune known. The crew of the *Content* had escaped death only by a very special piece of luck. "I saw d'Amfreville here," Tourville wrote to the minister, "in a pitiful state. If he had been half an hour longer in reaching Belle-Isle, he would have drowned." In a letter addressed to the naval intendant in Toulon, it is said about the *Content*: "M. d'Amfreville arrived at Belle-Isle with six pumps and two wells; half an hour later he was lost; fresh people, who were sent to him from land, saved him." The fourth ship, the *Arc-en-Ciel*, had great difficulty in reaching Belle-Isle.[138]

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There was great emotion in Paris when this unfortunate event was learned. The loss of two vessels, which sank in the open sea, dragging their crews into the abyss, with the exception of a few men; a third vessel avoiding the same fate only by a lucky chance, constituted a series of events that could, in the eyes of France and abroad, diminish the value of our navy. The four vessels having been fitted out at Toulon, Duquesne, who was in that port, was charged with making an inquiry into the work carried out to put these vessels in a condition to safely sail. Colbert seemed convinced that the refits of the four vessels had not been carried out with sufficient care, "it being neither natural," he wrote, "nor ordinary that a vessel, which has only been at sea for five or six months, should be in a condition to perish for lack of refit." The Marquis de Seignelay, who was at Valence, was charged by Colbert with addressing a severe reprimand to Arnoul, the intendant of Toulon. Without waiting for the results of the inquiry ordered by his father, Seignelay clearly accused the intendant, in a very harsh letter, of having caused the loss of the *Sans-Pareil* and the *Conquérant*, by the extreme negligence he showed in his service. One cannot help thinking that Seignelay wanted to find culprits and, by doing so, exonerate himself from all responsibility. According to him, Paris had given the most precise orders for the preparation of the four armed vessels at Toulon; only the execution had been lacking. Arnoul was relieved of his duties, and the captain of the port, as well as a master of naval construction, responsible for masting operations, were put in the Grosse-Tour. Seignelay was all the more willing to sacrifice the intendant of Toulon, as he was dissatisfied with his services, but he committed an act unworthy of his rank, by choosing, to strike this official, and, with him, the captain of the port and a master, a circumstance in which none of those affected had anything to reproach themselves with.[139]

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Duquesne did not profess a particular esteem for the stewards, with whom he had continual disagreements, but acting, in all circumstances, with a sincerity that was matched only by the independence of his character, he wrote to the Marquis de Seignelay: "It is a fact that the dismasting of the bowsprit of the *Sans-Pareil* is the primary cause of her misfortune, her foremast having followed, and, in falling, shook and caused leaks in the vessel... With regard to the refit of the *Sans-Pareil*, it is believed here that nothing was spared; it did not take on water while it was in the seas on this side and even until its dismasting, which shook its bow; this vessel is still one of those which were built in Brest, at a fixed price, which does not succeed happily in the navy."

Seignelay, probably not satisfied with the results of this investigation, gave the order to the intendant of galleys, Brodard, to undertake, with Duquesne and a controller of the navy, a new examination of the question. This second investigation reproduced, with more development, Duquesne's letter. The *Sans-Pareil* and the *Conquérant*, said the intendant of galleys, "were vessels, as it appears to me from a list of vessels in the port, recognized to be weak in wood, badly pegged and very broken, and which nevertheless are loaded with seventy pieces of cannon; who remain at sea for a whole summer, and who then pass, in a very windy season, into large western seas, that they are all the less able to suffer as the new wood that may have been put there carries away the old which is not capable of supporting it; loaded with this with the weight of their cannons, it is humanly impossible and without a miracle, if in this state some storm arrives which makes them dismasted, which also opens a ship, that they do not get completely lost, and this, Monseigneur, is so likely that you see that the *Arc - en - Ciel*, which was a new ship, built here, supported more the effort and the violence of the sea and was finally saved.[140]

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The orders coming from Paris, during the fitting out of these four ships, had been carried out, and the question of the dry docks, persistently put forward by Seignelay, had to be dismissed. The cause of the catastrophe which occurred on our coasts, we find it in the letter of the intendant of the galleys; In a bad season, ships had been sent to Rochefort which, due to their condition, as noted in the port archives, should have remained in the Mediterranean. What was learned in Toulon after the event, it would have been easy to know in Paris and Toulon, before giving these vessels the order to pass into the Ocean. Whether it concerns personnel, war actions, navigation and equipment, Colbert, who is not a sailor, cannot have an opinion of his own; his agents in the ports are in a similar situation. This is the weak point of the system; knowledge of the maritime profession is lacking in Paris and in the ports, and, for this very reason, questions of great importance escape the attention of the minister.

In 1681, Duquesne, having under his command seven ships and some lower-ranking vessels, was charged with hunting down a flotilla of Tripolitan corsairs who were coming as far as the coasts of Provence to capture merchant vessels. During the month of July, our squadron, cruising in the Archipelago, became aware of the ships it was pursuing; these, warned of our approach, took refuge on the island of Chios, which belonged to the Ottoman Porte.[141]

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Duquesne summoned the governor to force the Tripolitanians to put to sea again. The Turkish pasha having responded to this request with a refusal, the French division opened fire on the port and the fortifications defending the city; the latter suffered greatly from this cannonade, which lasted several hours. Duquesne's conduct was not approved, and France, to avoid a rupture with the Porte, which made the most vigorous complaints, agreed to pay compensation for the damage caused by our ships. We had no less to complain about the Algerian corsairs than the Tripolitan ships. The conduct of the Algerians, who continually violated the treaties concluded with us, deserved severe punishment, but it was not enough to want to inflict it on them; it was necessary to have the means. Landing an army on African soil was not a thought in France; besides the memory of the failure of Charles V was still present in everyone's minds, the situation in Europe did not allow us to attempt an enterprise which would have resulted in immobilizing, probably for a very long time, a significant portion of our naval and military forces. A recent creation would allow us to punish the Algerians for their bad faith. In 1679, Renau d'Eliçagaray had submitted to the Marine Council the plan of a ship on which he placed a mortar. Renau, whose small stature had led him to be nicknamed Little Renau, had devoted himself, from his youth, to the study of science; he dealt both with the construction of buildings and with questions relating to the attack and defense of places. In other words, Renau was a military engineer, and, according to the expression used at that time, a shipbuilder.[142]

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Struck by the poor results obtained by the navy when it acted against cities located near the seashore, he wondered whether it would be possible to make available to the fleets a formidable means used by the army, that is to say, bombardment. This idea, completely new, since no one supposed that mortars could be placed anywhere other than on solid ground, raised many objections, but Renau managed to convince his opponents and his proposal was accepted. In 1681, five bomb galliots, as the new vessels were called, were put into construction, some at Dunkirk and others at Le Havre. The trials of these ships, from both the navigation and firing points of view, were considered satisfactory.

In 1682, Duquesne was called to command the expedition that was to avenge the many grievances we had against the Algerians. On July 23, he arrived off Algiers with eleven ships, fifteen galleys, two fire ships, and the five bomb galleys built to Renau's plans. Hampered by bad weather, he found himself, several times, forced to interrupt preparations for the attack to put to sea. The galleys, having run out of water, were sent back to France. At the end of August, the weather having become favorable, the squadron made its combat preparations, and on the 30th, it opened fire. Father Levacher, who was serving as French consul in Algiers, came on behalf of the dey to ask for peace; The proposals he carried were not accepted by the commander-in-chief, and the bombardment continued. On September 12, the weather having become bad and the equinox approaching, Duquesne set sail and headed for Toulon. The bomb galleys had produced the results predicted by the inventor; part of the city of Algiers was in ashes.[143]

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The Algerians having refused to accept the conditions we deemed necessary to impose on them, a new expedition took place in 1683. During the month of June, Duquesne appeared off Algiers with thirteen ships and seven galliots, that is to say, with two more bombards than the previous year. Fire was opened on the 26th. A few days later, the city having suffered greatly, the dey Baba-Assan instructed Father Levacher to bring peace proposals to the squadron leader. Negotiations were immediately begun; every day, Christian slaves were returned to us. Hostages, already designated, were to be handed over to us and remain on our ships until the peace treaty was fully concluded. A satisfactory solution was therefore on the point of being reached when a revolution broke out in the city of Algiers. A certain Mezzo Marto, who was among the hostages, stirred up the militia and, putting himself at its head, invaded the dey's palace: Baba-Assan was killed, and the leader of the revolt became his successor. The negotiations were broken off and the bombardment resumed with renewed vigor; the city of Algiers was now nothing more than a pile of rubble. The men of the militia, whom the new dey was powerless to keep in obedience, gave themselves over to all sorts of disorder. They seized our consul, Father Levacher, and tied him to the mouth of a cannon which was fired in the direction of our fleet. As time passed, and with nothing indicating, on the part of the Algerians, a desire to resume negotiations, the squadron set sail for Toulon when the galleys' ammunition was exhausted. We returned without having obtained recognition of our rights from the dey; however, the squadron brought back six hundred slaves; on the other hand, the destruction, by our fire, of the buildings anchored in the port of Algiers, left the regency navy powerless to act for some time. Finally, threatened the following year with a new bombardment, the Algerians decided to sign a peace treaty whose duration was set at one hundred years.[144]

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Colbert, after a lifetime of work that had exhausted his strength, died on September 5, 1683. France had lost one of its greatest servants; by considering only the military navy, Colbert left behind a considerable body of work. Under his ministry, the ports of Brest and Toulon were expanded, and Rochefort was created. Men earning a living from the sea, fishermen, coastal traders, and long-distance sailors, were included on special lists. The minister established a basis for calculating the extent that could be given to our armaments. Sailors were divided into three classes, each to serve in turn on state vessels. This legislation advantageously replaced the violent measures used at that time to recruit crews for the war fleet. Until then, when the state built armaments in Brest, Toulon or Rochefort, crews were formed by forcibly seizing sailors who were in neighboring ports. If this measure was insufficient, commercial ports were closed along a certain stretch of coastline. Merchant ships were forbidden to put to sea before the personnel necessary for the needs of the moment had been assembled. Under these conditions, the regime devised by Colbert constituted a very serious advantage for maritime populations; if this system had worked regularly, it would have been considered a blessing by the sailors. But that was not how things turned out.[145]

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The wars that filled the reign of Louis XIV required continual armaments. The Navy Department would have incurred a grave responsibility if the lack of men had been an obstacle to the departure of our squadrons. The training of crews was one of the most painful preoccupations of Colbert's career. This situation almost never allowed him to apply the rule he had established; instead of being called up in turn, the classes were merged, and most often, all the men of the naval register, present in our ports, were sent to warships. This measure was very natural, since all were necessary for the defense of the country, but these ideas, which are accepted today, were not understood at that time. On the other hand, this general call coinciding with a regulation that only spoke of particular calls, left in the minds of the populations a deep hatred against maritime registration, the traces of which we will find for a long time.

The new ordinances therefore placed a heavy burden on the maritime populations. It was to alleviate this burden that Colbert established the invalids' fund. An ordinance of 1673 decided that in the future, a deduction of six deniers per livre would be made from the salaries of general and private officers of the navy and from the wages of the crews, "for the subsistence, maintenance and reward of officers, bargemen and sailors crippled on ships, and for the foundation of a general hospital in each of the arsenals of Rochefort and Toulon." These two hospitals were not built, but, with the funds intended for this purpose, the Navy Department gave relief to the men who would have been entitled to enter these establishments. This is the origin of the Navy Invalids Fund and the pensions known as half-pay.[146]

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This system was completed in 1703. From that time on, three deniers per livre were levied on the proceeds of all prizes. In 1709, the deduction from pay made for the benefit of the disabled was lowered, but it affected the salaries of civil servants, as well as the wages paid by shipowners to sailors on merchant ships: "To be used for the payment of pensions that we will grant, both to the disabled officers of our ships and galleys, who would be deemed worthy, and to the stewards and other officers of our ports and arsenals, as well as for half-pay, both for sailors and soldiers and for the workers of our arsenals and galleys who have been crippled or who have aged, to which rewards will similarly be admitted the disabled or crippled officers, sailors and soldiers on merchant ships."

Colbert organized the artillery service with particular care; Companies of apprentice gunners were permanently attached to the ports of Brest, Toulon and Rochefort. These companies, whose strength amounted to one hundred men, were commanded by a lieutenant and an ensign. The apprentice gunners spent eight months in the ports; after this period, devoted to their training, they returned to their quarters, while sailors from new levies came to take their place. The State maintained a certain number of master gunners permanently in each of our military ports. The marine troops, composed of the two regiments "the Marine and Royal des vaisseaus", created by Richelieu, the first in 1626, and the second in 1635, were increased, in 1669 and 1670, by two new regiments: "Royal Marine and Admiral."[147]

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In 1671, Louvois, having obtained from the king that these four regiments be placed at his disposal, Colbert raised one hundred free companies for the service of his department. The soldiers of these companies stood guard in the arsenals when they were not embarked. During their stay on land, the soldiers of the free companies were sent, in detachments, to gunnery schools where they trained with the various firearms used in the navy. They were taught to load and throw grenades; on board ships, in addition to the guard and police duties that were their responsibility, these soldiers took part in all work. Those among them who were able to play a useful role in the navy received additional pay. The ordinances and regulations, which we have just briefly analyzed, ensured that warships had capable sailors, skilled gunners, and good musketry. The ranks of the free companies included the number of non-commissioned officers necessary for the proper management of these personnel. The State maintained a certain number of masters of all professions. These masters, when not embarked, were employed in the guarding and maintenance of decommissioned vessels.

Colbert had founded arsenals, created fleets, and trained crews. The organization of a corps of officers was the essential complement to his work. In accordance with the provisions of a royal ordinance issued in 1669, the ranks of naval officers included three lieutenant generals, six squadron leaders, sixty ship captains, sixty lieutenants, sixty ensigns, and twenty fireship captains. The development of the navy quickly led to an increase in the number of officers of all ranks.[148]

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The new cadre included officers who were not very suited to fulfilling their duties. Some had seen little seafaring, others had only appeared on the decks of warships as officers in the naval troops; finally, a few had left the army to immediately take up service in the navy. Officers in this category still had the option of learning their new profession, but, assuming they had the will, a fairly long time would have to pass before this result could be achieved. Colbert briefly considered creating, within the Royal Marine Corps, a corps of officers who had undergone a long apprenticeship in the naval profession in the lower ranks. This project was not followed through, but Colbert allowed something approaching this organization to remain in practice. The Navy Department employed officers with temporary commissions; these officers, appointed by the minister, sometimes even by the captains of the ships on which they were embarked, were generally petty officers or pilots.

Colbert could not improvise what can only be achieved over time, that is, a capable and homogeneous corps of officers. Finding himself in the need to form, in a few years, a large staff, obliged, on the other hand, to draw it, if not entirely, then at least for the most part, from the social milieu to which the officers of the land army belonged, he could only strive to reconcile these diverse requirements. After facing the difficulties of the present, he turned his attention to the future. Firmly convinced that personnel are the most solid foundation of any military organization, he wanted to ensure the recruitment of the fleet staff under conditions different from those that had presided over its formation.[149]

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Richelieu had decided, in 1627, that sixteen gentlemen, maintained at state expense, would be instructed in everything related to the navy and navigation. This was, in the cardinal's mind, the starting point for an institution intended to train officers for the royal navy. This project had no immediate follow-up, and it does not appear to have been taken up by his successors. The Grand Masters and Superintendents of Navigation and Commerce had a private guard; that of the Duke of Beaufort, at the time of his death, consisted of forty-nine guards, of which twenty-five were designated to be attached to the person of the Grand Admiral. These twenty-five guards, all belonging to the nobility of the kingdom, formed the first core of the naval guards, called to become officers. An ordinance of April 22, 1670, decided that two detachments would be made from the company of guards, one of which would serve in the Mediterranean and the other in the Ocean; this company was disbanded in 1671, but reappeared in 1672. In 1682, the king ordered the creation, in each of the ports of Brest, Rochefort, and Toulon, of a company of gentlemen naval guards. The guards received special training and became ensigns after meeting certain embarkation conditions. From 1673 onward, naval guards were promoted to this rank.

Colbert focused his attention on all aspects of the service. The duties of captains and officers, discipline, pay and food for crews, and the armament and equipment of ships were regulated. The State had all the wood useful to the navy at its disposal. A Council, established in each port, was responsible for deliberating on new constructions and on refits in progress.[150]

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This Council was also tasked with reporting to the Minister on improvements and refinements introduced in naval architecture in France and abroad. The organization of arsenals, which plays a considerable role in the entire naval service, was the subject of carefully studied provisions. The ordinance of 1689, we should add, which appeared under the ministry of the Marquis de Seignelay, merely reproduced, with very slight modifications indicated by experience, the regulations issued by Colbert. When he took charge of the navy in 1663, it existed only in name. In 1672, allied with the English, we took part in the war against the Dutch. A few years later, our squadrons, under Duquesne, defeated the combined forces of Holland and Spain in the Mediterranean. We can see the progress made from 1663 to 1678, that is, in fifteen years. Colbert, Marquis de Seignelay, who had inherited his father's office, succeeded him on September 7, 1683.

II

For some time now, the Republic of Genoa had given us cause for complaint; during the war that ended in 1678, it had maintained secret relations with our enemies, and in particular with Spain. Since the conclusion of peace, the Republic continued to display hostile attitudes towards us. Diplomatic means might have been sufficient to resolve the pending difficulties, but Louis XIV, urged on by Seignelay, decided to use force.[151]

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A squadron comprising sixteen vessels, twenty galleys, and two galliots was placed under the command of Lieutenant-General Duquesne. Departing from Toulon on May 6, 1684, it appeared off Genoa on the 17th. The Minister of the Navy had embarked on this squadron. Given the necessary powers to negotiate with the Genoese, it was up to him, in the event that the Republic did not grant the satisfaction demanded in Paris, to order the fleet to act. On the 18th, Seignelay informed the government of the Republic of the reparations Louis XIV was demanding. The following day, the 19th, while we were waiting for a response, the Genoese opened fire on the French fleet. The bombardment began; a raid on the 24th in one of the suburbs of the city brought the Genoese to a compromise. It was decided, after a short negotiation, that the Doge, accompanied by four senators, would come to France to present the Republic's apologies to the King. A treaty, signed on February 3, 1685, put an end to the difficulties existing between France and the Republic of Genoa. On May 28, the naval force put to sea, touched at the Hyères Islands to resupply, then, after a cruise of several months along the coasts of Catalonia, it returned to Toulon.

The Barbary pirates continued to devastate our maritime trade; bowing before force, they signed treaties whose clauses they forgot as soon as our fleets had disappeared. In 1685, Marshal d'Estrées received the order to go before Tripoli and Tunis and to demand reparations for the harm done to our merchant navy by the corsairs of the two regencies. At the end of June, the city of Tripoli, after having been bombarded, submitted to the conditions that the marshal imposed on it.[152]

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The Christian slaves were returned to us, and the Bey gave us five hundred thousand francs to compensate our trade. It was not necessary to resort to force to persuade the Bey of Tunis to negotiate; after handing over the Christians taken by the regency's corsairs, he paid a ransom. Leaving Tunis, the Marshal appeared before Algiers to remind the Dey of his commitments to France. The latter took no notice of this warning. Our maritime trade having given rise to very strong complaints against the Algerian corsairs, a new expedition was decided upon. During the month of June 1688, Marshal d'Estrées left Toulon with orders to bombard Algiers if our demands were not met. All satisfaction being refused us, the squadron opened fire on the city. Yielding to the inspirations of a blind fury, the Algerians renewed the scenes of the year 1685; they put to death our consul, Father Vicaire, and fourteen Frenchmen. The marshal, considering that it was necessary to resort to reprisals, fifteen Turks, taken from among the prisoners, were placed on a raft and shot; this raft, abandoned to the action of the offshore winds, ran aground on the coast. As a result of inexcusable negligence, the bomb galleys had not been put, before their departure, in a condition to perform good service; moreover, the powder used in loading the bombs was of poor quality. The marshal found himself obliged to withdraw before having obtained the results on which they were counting in Paris. However, when tempers calmed down, the Algerians, fearing further bombardments, began negotiations with France that resulted in the conclusion of a treaty in 1689.[153]

153

We have said that England wanted British warships to be saluted by foreign ships in the seas surrounding its shores; the latter had to lower their flags and set their sails. The English, considering this salute a mark of deference due to them, did not return it. Nations with navies powerful enough to compete with Great Britain's naval forces refused to submit to a ceremony incompatible with their dignity. This question, which never received a definitive solution, was the source of continual difficulties. Spain, not admitting the supremacy which the Court of London was arrogating to itself, had given its officers orders not to salute English ships and to defend themselves to the last extremity if any attempt was made to force them to do so. The Republic of the United Provinces, in spite of the engagements it had contracted in this regard with Great Britain, was striving to evade the obligation to salute the English flag under the humiliating conditions which we have indicated. France had, at all times, rejected the pretensions of England. On only one occasion did we deviate from this rule; it was, as we have reported, during the passage through England of Sully, sent by Henry IV to compliment James II on his accession to the throne. In 1634, after a very lively debate on this question, the following convention was concluded between Louis XIII and Charles I: the English saluted our warships when they encountered them closer to the coast of France than to the coast of England, and in the opposite hypothesis, that is to say, when the encounter took place closer to the coast of England than to the coast of France, our ships saluted first. This salute was immediately returned. England, forced by circumstances, relaxed her pretensions, but she did not abandon them.[154]

154

During the reign of Charles II, the English navy was ordered to demand the salute of all foreign vessels encountered in the so-called British seas, regardless of their nationality. The exception made in our favor disappeared. Louis XIV, informed of this decision by our ambassador, the Count d'Estrades, immediately made known to London his firm determination to resist an attempt aimed at reestablishing a right whose legitimacy we had never acknowledged. The king ended a letter he wrote to the Count of Estrades on the subject of this affair with this significant passage: "I wish that, in any response to such a haughty declaration, the king and the Chambers know, through your mouth, that I neither ask nor seek an accommodation in the matter of the flag, because I will know how to maintain my right, whatever may happen." Faced with the resolute attitude of Louis XIV, Charles II gave in. It was agreed that the ships of the two nations would remain, when they could recognize each other from a distance, at a great distance from each other; in the event of an unexpected encounter, which could occur, at sunrise, for example, they were to either salute each other simultaneously, or not exchange any salute.

We were therefore, as far as maritime greetings were concerned, on a footing of complete equality with our neighbours across the Channel. France should have stopped there and not demanded from other powers what she was unwilling to grant to England. Unfortunately, in this question, the starting point had been lost sight of. Originally, we, along with the English and the Dutch, had refused to admit the right of ownership that the Portuguese and the Spanish had assumed over the seas in which the countries they had discovered or conquered were situated.[155]

155

Later, in agreement with all the maritime powers, we fought against the supremacy that England claimed over the seas surrounding her empire. We therefore fought for a principle, that of the freedom of the seas, defended by the Dutchman Grotius, and attacked by the Englishman Selden, as we have said above. But the question of principle had disappeared to give way to a question of precedence, in which France did not want to be treated less well than England. Such demands could have no other result than to lead to conflicts, most often degenerating into acts of hostility. As an example, we will cite the battle fought in the Mediterranean by Tourville against Vice-Admiral Papachin, while peace reigned between France and Spain.

On June 2, 1688, at daybreak, fifteen leagues off the coast of Alicante, Lieutenant-General de Tourville, whose flag was flying aboard the *Content*, a fifty-gun ship, sighted two Spanish vessels, the *Capitane*, a sixty-six-gun ship under Vice-Admiral Papachin, and the *San Jeronimo*, a fifty-four-gun ship. The *Content* was accompanied by two smaller vessels, the *Solide* and the *Emporté*, commanded by Captains de Châteaurenault and d'Estrées. These three vessels were heading off Algiers to join the squadron commanded by Marshal d'Estrées. Complying with the Court's orders, Tourville put to sea and sent word to Vice-Admiral Papachin that he should salute the French flag. The Spanish Vice-Admiral having formally refused the request addressed to him, the action began. The *Content* fought the *Capitane*, and the *Emporté* and the *Solide* the *San Jeronimo*.[156]

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A cannonball having cut the *Capitane's* flag halyard, while the engagement had already been going on for some time, the captain of the *San Jeronimo* believed that his commander had surrendered, so he lowered his flag. D'Estrées remained near the *San Jeronimo*, while Captain de Châteaurenault joined the *Content*, which was fighting with great vigor against an opponent who was far superior to him. After a fight lasting several hours, the *Capitane* lowered her colors; she had one hundred men out of action, damage to her hull, and her mainmast was down. Tourville again ordered the Spanish admiral to salute our flag. "Papachin sent word to me," Tourville wrote in his report, "through the officer I had sent him, that he would salute me, but that it was only force that compelled him to do so; and before saluting me, he had his entire crew assembled and told them that they saw clearly that he was compelled to do so; they all responded with one voice: Yes, Señor; he saluted me with nine cannon shots, I responded to his salute very honestly, and went to offer him everything that depended on me."

The damage caused by the French ships did not allow them to rally, off Algiers, the squadron of Admiral d'Estrées. Our losses, from the point of view of personnel, were significant; the *Content* had sixty-two men killed or wounded; Tourville had received two wounds. In the situation in which Europe found itself at that time, on the eve of a general war that everyone foresaw, it was not for such a cause that we should have lost men, and put our ships out of service. This feeling was, without doubt, that of Tourville, for his report began thus: "My Lord, I have time to speak to you at present only of an affair which happened to me at sea, fifteen leagues from Alicante. I unfortunately found, in the conjecture of present affairs, under my sails, two warships from Spain."[157]

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We were still far from the time when the importance of the greeting exchanged between two ships meeting at sea would be reduced to its true proportions.

At the beginning of 1688, the navy lost one of the most remarkable men it had ever had at its head. Duquesne died in Paris on February 2, at the age of seventy-eight, less than four years after leaving active service. The battles he had fought on the coast of Sicily, against the Hispano-Dutch, had earned him a European reputation. Of great firmness of character, severe in service, no one had contributed more than he to establishing order and discipline in the squadrons. At his school were trained general officers and captains who were to do honor to the navy. Knowing thoroughly all the parts of the service, he was the most solid support of Colbert in the organization of the ports, and, on every important question, he was consulted, not only by the minister, but also by the king. Never compromising with his conscience, he supported his ideas with a frankness often going to the point of rudeness. It can even be noted that, in most of his letters, after having responded, in a precise manner, to the requests addressed to him, or exposed the facts for which he had the duty to report, he inserted a useful truth, even though this truth might not be favorably received in Paris. It should be added that Colbert showered Duquesne with respect and made the greatest use of his advice, which, moreover, always ended up triumphing. Thus, in the ports and at sea, Duquesne had rendered the most eminent services to the navy. How was this great sailor rewarded?[158]

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The king gave Duquesne the sum necessary to purchase land, which was established as a marquisate; Duquesne became a marquis, but this was not a reward commensurate with the services of a man who had defeated Ruyter and given our nascent navy the luster and prestige that come with victory. The ship captains, who had distinguished themselves under his command, had been appointed squadron leaders, and the most brilliant of all, Tourville, was lieutenant-general, finally d'Estrées, who should have been disgraced, after the shipwreck of his squadron on the Avès islands, had been made marshal of France, in 1681. Now, Duquesne, appointed lieutenant-general, in 1669, was still lieutenant-general when he died in 1688. However, he possessed the complete confidence of the king. While Duquesne was in front of Algiers in 1683, Louis XIV wrote to him to inform him of his intention to bombard Genoa and to make a descent into the suburbs of the city, a project which was kept secret until the day when the fleet left Toulon for this expedition in 1684. The king wrote to Duquesne a letter from which we borrow this passage: "You must be informed that the Genoese, having attracted my indignation by their conduct, I have resolved to send my naval army to their port, both to prohibit them from the trade which they ordinarily carry on along the coast of Italy, and to throw bombs into the city, and even to make some descent on the coast at the place of Saint-Pierre d'Arène, or such other place as you consider most suitable; and it is on this project that I want you to let me know your thoughts and send me a memorandum of the manner in which you judge it can be executed." The king, as this letter shows, was very happy to have a man like Duquesne at the head of his naval army, but he did not want to name him vice-admiral.[159]

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Duquesne was a Protestant, such was the insurmountable obstacle to his advancement. After his campaign on the coast of Sicily, surprised at not receiving the just reward due to his services, Duquesne had discreetly explained it to Colbert. After exchanging a few letters on the subject, Colbert wrote to Duquesne on February 1, 1680: "I have reported to the King the letter you wrote to me on the 20th of last month; His Majesty is satisfied with the services you render him, and you could expect all the favors to which you are entitled, if the exclusions you impose on yourself did not prevent His Majesty from granting you greater ones, which I would very much like, I assure you, to see you achieve." "The Protestant officers serving in the navy were treated with less consideration than Duquesne; not only were they refused any advancement, but they were threatened with losing their ranks. Colbert and Seignelay saw, with great regret, Louis XIV embarking on a path which was to weaken the navy by depriving it of good officers: forced to bow to the very firm will of the king, the minister and his son brought, in the execution of the measures which they were ordered to take, a great deal of temperament. The threat made to the Protestant officers to remove their rank was not followed by effect; as for jobs, Colbert particularly recommended to the intendants to give preference to Catholics only in the case where the service would not suffer. The king had long entertained feelings towards the Protestants which were unfortunately to lead to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. This impolitic measure was taken on October 22, 1685.[160]

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BOOK VII

League of Augsburg. - Battle of Bantry Bay. - Reunion of our naval forces at Brest. - Tourville's fine maneuver. - Victory at Bévéziers - Offshore campaign.

One of Louis XIV's most formidable adversaries, the Prince of Orange, Stadtholder of Holland, had succeeded in uniting the Emperor, Spain, Sweden, and Savoy against us. This alliance, known as the League of Augsburg, ostensibly aimed to maintain the Treaties of Westphalia, Nijmegen, and Regensburg. In reality, the League was only waiting for a favorable opportunity to deprive France of the conquests these treaties assured her. Louis XIV, informed of his adversaries' plans, made futile efforts to dissolve this League. Learning that the Prince of Orange was hastening his armaments, he resolved to attack his enemies before they were ready to enter the field. A French army marched, in the middle of 1688, against the Emperor; the King declared war on Holland, on November 26 of the same year, and on Spain, on April 15 of the following year. On May 17, 1689, it was England which came to join its allies. At the end of 1688, a revolution had broken out in England. The Stadtholder of Holland, the Prince of Orange, had become, under the name of William III, King of Great Britain; his father-in-law, James II, obliged, in the face of the uprising of his people, to flee, had come to seek refuge in France.[161]

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Louis XIV saw William III only as the stadtholder of Holland, and he resolved to support the cause of the dethroned king, who still had supporters in Ireland. James II passed through this island where he was to be joined by a body of troops placed at his disposal by Louis XIV. Lieutenant-General de Châteaurenault left Brest with twenty-four ships, heading for Bantry Bay, located in the southwest of Ireland. On May 10, he arrived at his destination; the troops were beginning to disembark when discoveries signaled the approach of the English. It was Vice-Admiral Herbert's squadron, composed of twenty-one vessels, among which were ships of a higher rank than our strongest vessels. The English were still far away, and the wind was blowing from the very direction they had to follow to reach the bay. Châteaurenault, realizing that he could not be reached during the night, remained at anchor. The next morning, the French fleet set sail and headed towards the enemy, leaving in the bay the ships on which were the men and equipment that had not been able to be landed.

The battle began around eleven thirty. Whether the signal, ordering the formation of the line of battle had not been given at the right time, or whether it had been poorly executed, the fleet, at the moment of giving the enemy a broadside, found itself in disorder. Some time passed before, the line being regularly formed, all our ships were in a position to take part in the action. The enemy, while fighting, maneuvered to drive us away. Châteaurenault, considering that his first duty was to ensure the success of the mission entrusted to him, ceased firing at five o'clock, and resumed the route to Bantry Bay.[162]

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The English squadron, badly mistreated, moved away and soon disappeared. Châteaurenault, as soon as the landing of troops and munitions was completed, headed for Brest, where he anchored on May 17. We had gained an indisputable advantage over the enemy; this advantage would have been greater if, at the beginning of the action, there had not been a little confusion in our movements. As for the English squadron, charged with preventing the landing of the troops we were carrying to Ireland, it had not succeeded in disrupting this operation. Although the intended objective had not been achieved, it was admitted in London that the English fleet had been victorious. The new government did not want the war to begin with a defeat, and, to better affirm the success of the English navy, Herbert was created Earl of Torrington. We must add that this admiral was one of the most ardent supporters of William of Nassau. Measures were taken in France to assemble imposing forces in the Channel, which was to be the theatre of war. Lieutenant-General de Tourville, who had left Toulon at the end of May to go to Brest with a squadron of twenty ships, was about to arrive at his destination when he was informed of the presence, off Ushant, of an Anglo-Dutch fleet cruising to intercept him. He remained at sea, waiting for a favourable opportunity to allow him to continue his route without being disturbed by the enemy. A few days later, with the winds blowing from the fresh southwest, he headed for Brest, where he entered without the English fleet, dispersed by the bad weather, being able to oppose him.[163]

163

The alliance of England, Spain, and Holland placed the French navy in the presence of the combined forces of the three great maritime powers of Europe. Not since the accession of Louis XIV to the throne had the fleets created by Colbert been subjected to such a severe test. In 1672, with the English as allies, we had waged war on the Dutch; the English having withdrawn from the fight, our navy had first faced the Dutch, and, shortly after, the Dutch united with the Spanish. Not only had the navy, in these various circumstances, been equal to its task, but it had shown itself superior to its enemies; Duquesne had had the signal honor of defeating the great sailor of Holland, the illustrious Ruyter. Duquesne had disappeared; it was from among his lieutenants that the commander-in-chief of the fleet intended to stand up, in the Channel and on our coasts, to the naval forces of England and Holland was to be chosen. Tourville, who already had the most brilliant service records, was entrusted with this glorious mission. After several campaigns against the Barbary pirates, he had entered the royal navy. A ship captain at the age of twenty-five, he took part in the battle of Candia, under the Duke of Beaufort, and served with the Count of Estrées, during the Dutch war, in 1672. He commanded a ship in the fleet which, under the orders of Duquesne and Vivonne, fought the Dutch and the Spanish in the waters of Sicily. His conduct at the Battle of Agosta earned him the rank of squadron leader, and after the campaigns of Genoa, Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli, he was appointed lieutenant-general. Until then, Tourville had served with the greatest distinction, but as a subordinate. We shall see him at work in the role of commander-in-chief. The naval army set sail at the end of August, but was unable to reach the enemy, who had received orders to avoid any encounter.[164]

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Tourville, after some time at sea, returned to Brest, where the fleet was disarmed. Seignelay had completed this short campaign on the commander-in-chief's ship. On November 1, 1689, Tourville was granted the Vice-Admiralty of the Levant; this appointment was evidently intended not only to reward his services, but also to give him greater authority.

On June 23, 1690, the fleet, consisting of seventy-eight vessels, eighteen fireships, and five frigates, left Brest to meet the enemy. The vanguard was commanded by Lieutenant-General de Châteaurenault, who had under his command Lieutenant-General Marquis de Villette and squadron leaders de Relingues and de Langeron. The various divisions of the main body were commanded by Lieutenant-General d'Amfreville and squadron leaders de Nesmond, de Laporte and de Coëtlogon. At the head of the rearguard was placed Vice-Admiral d'Estrées, having under his command Lieutenant-General Gabaret and squadron leaders de Flacourt and Pannetié. With the exception of Vice-Admiral Victor d'Estrées, who had recently joined the navy, all these lieutenant-generals or squadron leaders had been fighting at sea for twenty-five years. The same was true of most of the captains. A few days after his departure, the French fleet arrived in sight of the Isle of Wight, where the enemy forces were anchored. Herbert commanded the combined fleet of Holland and England. The allies had not advanced their armaments with great rapidity, and they were not ready when the French were sighted. The presence of our fleet threw, says one English author, a great fear into England; on the other hand, the government feared a Jacobite rising.[165]

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Herbert put to sea with sixty ships; he had formal orders to fight the French. Taking advantage of the wind blowing from the north, he kept a long distance from our fleet until he had been rallied by all the ships whose armaments were not completed when he left his anchorage.

On July 10, the two fleets were within a short distance of each other, not far from Cape Beachy Head; the allies, who had the advantage of the wind, let the French fleet bear away. The Dutch, commanded by Vice-Admiral Evertzen, marched at the head of the combined fleet; They attacked our vanguard with great vigor, and at close range. Shortly after, the center and rearguard of the allies having taken up their positions, the combat became general. Admiral Evertzen had not extended our line to the leading ship of the vanguard; the leader of his squadron had stopped a few ships in front of the Dauphin Royal, which was mounted by the commander of the vanguard, Lieutenant-General de Châteaurenault. The latter, as soon as the combat began, signaled Lieutenant-General de Villette's division to tack and turn back to windward of the Dutch. During the time necessary to execute this order, Châteaurenault, with the ships that remained to him, withstood, without disadvantage, the fire of the enemy vanguard. When Villette's division, after having turned around, took up position to windward of Admiral Evertzen's squadron, the latter, seeing itself caught between two fires, veered downwind, but, delayed in its maneuver by the weakness of the breeze, it passed, before having closed the wind on the other tack, in front of the center of our army from which it came under fire.[166]

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Châteaurenault, seeing that his opponent was slipping away, veered to follow him. The center and rearguard fought with no less valour than Châteaurenault's squadron. The main body and rearguard of the combined fleet, badly battered by our fire, were keeping to windward as the action dragged on. After eight hours of very fierce combat, with the enemy out of range, the firing ceased. A sixty-eight-gun Dutch ship, the *Frisland*, was seized by the *Souverain*, which was mounted by squadron leader de Nesmond. Tourville, says Father Hoste, in his account of the battle, "disabled three vessels and was about to cut eleven, having himself towed by fifteen longboats, if the tide had not opposed his glorious design."

Twelve enemy vessels, most of them belonging to Admiral Evertzen's squadron, were leveled like pontoons; the resulting calm saved these vessels by making any maneuver impossible. The combined army having dropped anchor, the French fleet imitated this maneuver. At the end of the ebb tide the enemies set sail and the dismasted vessels, almost all Dutch, had themselves towed by their longboats. During the night of July 10-11, the allies burned two Dutch vessels, one of eighty and the other of sixty-eight. The allies, who retained the advantage of the wind, made for the anchorage of the Dunes. The French set out in pursuit; both fleets anchored to spread the tide when it was unfavourable. As soon as the Anglo-Dutch army had entered the Thames, Herbert gave the order to remove all the buoys on the coasts of England. We find an indication of the losses suffered by the enemy in a letter that Louis XIV wrote to the Archbishop of Paris, dated 18 July.[167]

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The king said: "The enemy lost on this occasion the ship Frisland, with sixty-eight guns, which surrendered to the ship *Souverain*, commanded by the Marquis de Nesmond, and two others of the same force were sunk along with two of their fireships. Meanwhile, my army, taking advantage of its advantage, used the tides to pursue the enemy, who still had the wind in their favor and who, seeing themselves pressed hard and with no hope of being able to save the ships that had been dismasted, decided to blow up three of them and sink four others. On the 12th, the enemy fleets being abeam of Cape Ferley, thirty leagues from the Isle of Wight, where the battle had begun, and my army still pursuing them, the Count of Tourville seeing, to leeward, six dismasted vessels which were sailing off the coast of England, immediately detached a squadron under the command of the Marquis de Villette, which burned four of these vessels and ran aground the other two. On July 20, a Te Deum was sung in the cathedral of Paris to celebrate the victory of Bévéziers, such is the name given to it, won by Tourville over the combined fleet of Holland and England. The English fleet was, in terms of numbers, a little inferior to ours, but the vessels which composed it were almost all of a high rank. Tourville said in a letter dated July 13: "Most of all the English ships were the strongest they had; there appeared to me twelve ships of the first rank and the others of sixty guns; the Dutch had most of their ships with three decks. I only saw two that had fifty cannons."[168]

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Barely had he arrived in the Thames than Herbert was taken to the Tower of London and brought before a Council of War, which acquitted him. Dissatisfied with this judgment, William not only replaced Herbert in command of the fleet, which was given to Admiral Russell, but he also stripped him of all his positions. A large number of officers, who had sided with their general, shared his disgrace. Politics played a large part in the conduct of the Court of London; it feared that the close alliance between Holland and England would be compromised by the results of the day of July 10. Indeed, the Dutch, accusing their allies of having sacrificed them in this battle, made Europe resound with their complaints. The English, in turn, severely criticized the conduct of Admiral Evertzen, who, they said, had attacked too early and in disorder. Tourville, in a letter of July 11, says: "The Dutch came, with all possible vigor, against our advance guard. Herbert would not fight me and did not even fight with any of our flags; I fought with his vice-admiral and two seconds as big as himself." The reproaches that the English and the Dutch addressed to each other, and, on the other hand, the reports of Tourville, give the physiognomy of this battle. Admiral Evertzen had maneuvered with more vigor than skill; the English had fought well, but their admiral, who was at the same time the head of the combined fleet, had shown, by keeping himself further away from us than his line of battle was, an exaggerated prudence. As for the French squadron, the superiority of its fire over that of the enemy had been apparent from the very beginning of the action. The commander of our vanguard had behaved like a brave and skillful sailor; finally, the calm and the current had prevented Tourville from carrying out the maneuvers that would have made the results of his victory even more significant.[169]

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Our fleet, rallied by a squadron of galleys commanded by the Chevalier de Noailles, appeared off Torbay on August 1st. A detachment of sailors and soldiers, under the command of Vice-Admiral d'Estrées, was put ashore at Teigmouth. The landing force, after destroying a battery defending the harbor, set twelve warships and several merchant ships ablaze. The French fleet anchored on August 17th in the harbor of Bertheaume. At the time when Tourville, exercising command of a large fleet for the first time, won a brilliant victory, people in Paris were not entirely satisfied with the results of the campaign. Seignelay would have liked Tourville, taking advantage of his victory, to attack the enemy ports and burn the merchant ships, thus causing irreparable losses to English commerce. The minister forgot that the French fleet had not fought the Anglo-Dutch fleet for eight consecutive hours without suffering serious damage. Tourville wrote that "he had munitions to take and masts to change." To carry out the plans formed by the minister, it would have been necessary to have a light squadron, ready to move to the English coast immediately after the enemy entered the Thames. Reinforced by a few vessels, taken from among the least mistreated, it would certainly have done a lot of harm to the enemy; unfortunately this light squadron did not exist. In March, seven thousand men had been sent to Ireland, which was insufficient to obtain results of any importance. Our troops, defeated at Limerick, returned to France on a division of the fleet that left Brest to fulfill this mission.[170]

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The Marquis de Seignelay ended his brilliant career on November 6, 1690. His death was all the more unfortunate for the navy because Louis XIV, who had been fortunate until then in his choice of ministers, appointed as his successor Phélypeaux de Pontchartrain, former president of the parliament of Rennes, comptroller of finances since 1689, a man of merit, moreover, but whose background had not qualified him for the position to which he was called. It was not long before the extent of the king's error in entrusting the navy department to a man who himself declared he had none of the necessary knowledge to occupy this position became apparent. The offices, no longer controlled by the firm hand of Colbert or the imperious will of Seignelay, took on considerable importance. Thus, in the midst of war, the command of our naval forces was to be entrusted to men unfamiliar with the maritime profession, and these men, who bore no weight of responsibility, found themselves placed under the orders of a minister less knowledgeable about fleet service than his clerks.

After the victory won by the French fleet in 1690, the Ministry of the Navy, full of hope for the future and no longer doubting anything, wanted the year 1691 to be marked by resounding successes. The offices decided that the naval force, under the command of Tourville, would march out in the spring, blockade enemy ports to prevent the allies from joining forces, and defeat them separately if they attempted to put to sea. Tourville would detach a division which would cruise in the vicinity of the Isles of Scilly, the landing point of the Smyrna convoy, to the capture of which the ministry, which was preoccupied by the question of money, moreover, rightly, attached the greatest interest. This plan was perhaps a little bold in the presence of the alliance of England and Holland; in any case, to put it into execution, it was necessary that the forces at our disposal be ready before those which the allies intended to put into line.[171]

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At that time, when the organization of the ports was not yet very solid, the outfitting of ships caused continual difficulties. Since the stores were not supplied, it was necessary to deal with the merchants, not for future needs, but for current needs. Colbert followed these operations with particular care, which were the subject of daily correspondence between Paris and the ports. The desired result, that is, the outfitting of a fleet, could only be achieved through the greatest effort and extreme skill on the part of the administrators responsible for gathering the necessary supplies. Now, Pontchartrain had dismissed the collaborators of Colbert and Seignelay, to replace them with men devoted to his person, but incapable. The fleet, which however only numbered sixty-nine vessels, was barely ready at the beginning of June; at that moment, the allies had made their junction, and there could be no question of either blockading them or defeating them in detail. Finally, it was learned that the enemy had forces far superior to ours; the ministry had to abandon the plans it had formed. The vessels armed in the ports of Rochefort and Lorient, obeying the instructions coming from Paris, were gathered at Belle-Isle, under the command of Lieutenant-General de Villette, awaiting the squadron from Brest which was not ready. If the Anglo-Dutch fleet came to establish its cruise on Ushant, the junction could no longer take place; On the other hand, nothing prevented the enemy from attacking and defeating the detachment which was at Belle-Isle. Tourville had to exchange a long correspondence with Paris to obtain the order to be given to Lieutenant-General de Villette to seize the first favorable opportunity to go to Brest. If the enemy had been more prudent, the ships anchored at Belle-Isle would have been seriously compromised. [172]

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Instructions, signed by the king, were sent to Tourville on May 26. The fleet was to cruise at the entrance to the English Channel, "so that," it was stated, "no vessel could enter or leave without falling into the hands of His Majesty's ships." Since the king's main goal was to protect the coasts of France from any insult, Tourville was formally ordered to await news of the enemy's movements during this cruise. No less importance was attached to the capture of the Smyrna convoy. This convoy, which left Livorno on April 7, had been sighted a month later off the coast of Alicante, and it was assumed in Paris that it would arrive at the opening of the Channel at the beginning of June. Tourville was ordered not to enter the sea to search for the enemy, but if the enemy left the Channel, the conduct to be adopted by the commander of the fleet was indicated. Article X of the instructions stated: "In the event that the enemy leaves the Channel and is in superior numbers, His Majesty does not want him to attack them; on the contrary, he wants him to avoid them, while preserving, as much as possible, the reputation of his naval force, and taking advantage of the favorable opportunities that his capacity and experience can create, being certain that there may be such dispositions at sea that the small number can become superior to the large." The writer, whoever he was, of these instructions, was obviously convinced that, being in sight of the enemy, the leader of a fleet could, at his discretion, accept or refuse combat. Tourville added the following footnote after Article X: "It would be necessary to be informed of the number and strength of the warships of the enemy army; we should not hesitate to attack them, if their forces were superior to ours by only a small number of vessels of six, seven, or even eight.[173]

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As I have already had the honor of telling the King, from the moment two armies are facing each other, in a position to recognize each other, it is impossible to avoid a battle. When an enemy army wants to engage the other and it has the wind, in a season where the night is only three to four hours long, and where the gales cannot facilitate a separation, there would be no other expedient than to abandon all the ships which are not finely sailed, which cannot be practiced, because it would be a maneuver which would intimidate the crews in such a way that it would be very difficult to be able to reassure them when it would be necessary to fight; all the general officers, and those who have experience at sea, will agree on this fact, and that the best course (although inferior) is to await the enemy in good order and maintain a brave countenance." The instructions also contained various provisions whose uselessness or danger Tourville was obliged to demonstrate. From these instructions, somewhat obscure and on several points contradictory, emerged the following orders: Cruise at the entrance to the Channel, seize the Smyrna convoy, protect the coasts of France and avoid combat against superior forces. How could one have the thought of capturing the Smyrna convoy, when the fleet had a cruising point from which it could only deviate under certain conditions? Was it to be assumed that the British Admiralty would be so far below its task that it would take no measures to ensure the arrival of a convoy impatiently awaited in England and Holland?[174]

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Either the enemy fleet, which could not be unaware of the French position, would come and fight us to allow this convoy a free passage, or ships sent to meet it would indicate a route providing complete safety for the merchant fleet. Thus, not straying far from the coast of France, avoiding combat with the Allied naval forces, and capturing the Smyrna convoy were orders that could not be reconciled.

On July 4, Tourville was cruising in the area indicated by his instructions. Learning shortly afterward, through his discoveries, that the enemy was close to the point where the French fleet was stationed, he moved away in a westerly direction. On July 14, a convoy of fourteen ships, escorted by two warships, was sighted; The *Marie-Rose*, of fifty guns, the frigate *Constant Warvick* and some merchant ships fell into our hands. On July 16, the captain of a sixty-ton barque, coming from Martinique, informed us that, eight days previously, being in latitude 47° 47' and ninety leagues from the westernmost land of Ireland, he had sighted a convoy of eighty sails heading north. It was, without a doubt, the convoy from Smyrna which was constantly being thought of in Paris, although the cruising point imposed on Tourville, despite his observations, removed all chance of capturing it. From the 8th to the 13th, the winds having blown from the southwest, it was evident that this merchant fleet had arrived at its destination at the time when we had news of it for the first time. Nevertheless, the army headed north to put itself in a position to cut off this fleet if, by chance, it attempted to pass from Ireland into the Channel. Tourville did not believe this; he was, moreover, convinced that the leaders of the convoy, if they took this decision, would only carry it out under the escort of the entire Anglo-Dutch fleet.[175]

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However, we had orders to avoid this fleet. The commander-in-chief of the allied fleet, Admiral Russell, after searching in vain for the French, who continued to evade, headed for the coast of Ireland, where he assumed we had gone with the aim of intercepting the Smyrna convoy. Having secured the passage of this merchant fleet, on which the attention of England and Holland was fixed, he returned south, and on August 2, the Anglo-Dutch army was once again within a short distance of ours. When news of the fleet arrived in Paris, the minister and his advisers learned, with great satisfaction, that we had not had any engagements with the enemy, but they could not understand why the commander of this fleet considered it dangerous to maneuver in sight of the allies. Tourville was obliged to provide, in this regard, continual explanations and to support his opinion, which should have been sufficient for the minister, with that of the general officers, which, moreover, was, in all respects, in accordance with his own. Some English ships having appeared in the harbor of Bertheaume, the alarms redoubled in Paris and the minister seemed surprised that the fleet had moved away from its cruise. Tourville wrote to the minister: "It seemed to me, Monseigneur, that there was nothing in my conduct during this campaign that was not approved by the general officers and in accordance with my instructions, and I beg you to be persuaded that no one has more desire than me to do something, but the knowledge that I have of the profession obliges me to take precautions, and I have always seen the officers of Paris carry out the finest enterprises in the world, and very different from this feeling when they are here; and I am always the same, because I know all the disadvantages and impossibilities, and it seems to me that I have sufficiently made my good will known to the King, when I offered to fight the enemy with eight ships less than them.[176]

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I know all the drawbacks and impossibilities, and it seems to me that I have sufficiently made my good will known to the King when I offered to fight the enemy with eight ships fewer than them. Regarding a cruise, it is impossible to maintain it forever, because of the chases one gives, the contrary winds, the movements one must make to avoid an enemy fleet, and the seasons. And if, in this last gale, I had been on my first cruise, I would be in the Channel with our fleet, and I would have had many more ships inconvenienced, trying to make more sails to avoid running into them, for you know how they were forced to mend all the masts from the last campaign in Brest to put them back into service."

Tourville had received a formal, absolute order not to return before September 1st, but the minister, who was more concerned with the fleet's maneuvers than was necessary, had not attached importance to matters that should have been the subject of his special attention. The fleet had left Brest with insufficient supplies and poor quality supplies. Tourville declared to the minister at the beginning of August that if supplies and refreshments did not reach him very promptly, he would be forced to return to port, even if he had to fight, if the enemy were in his way. The number of sick was considerable. On August 13th, the fleet was on the verge of running out of supplies; not receiving any supplies offshore, it anchored in the harbor of Bertheaume. This campaign, known as the offshore campaign, is a true masterpiece; Tourville's skillful maneuvers were admired by all the navies of Europe. The enemy, superior in force, had not been able to reach the French fleet, nor undertake anything on our coasts.[177]

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This immense armament had been of no use to the enemy, such was the general feeling on the other side of the strait. Complaints arose from all sides against William of Orange, accused of betraying the interests of the English people; the number of opponents of the new regime grew rapidly. While our enemies themselves bowed before the supreme skill of the commander of the French fleet, people in Paris were not satisfied with the results of the campaign. Men, possessing only the vaguest notions of the navy, lacked the wisdom to bow, as Colbert would have done, to the opinion of an admiral of Tourville's valor. The minister and the bureaus were unable to see the situation in its true light; With their eyes fixed on the victory of Bévéziers, they believed that the navy could dare anything and only the most daring combinations attracted their attention. In reality, in Paris, Tourville was accused of timidity. The campaign of 1692 will show us the consequences of this feeling that nothing justified; we will also see what happens to a military force, whether it be the army or the navy, whose direction is handed over to men who are not up to their duties.[178]

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BOOK VIII

Campaign plan adopted for the year 1692. - The fleet enters the English Channel. - Battle of La Hougue. - Retreat of the army. - Fifteen vessels are burned by the enemy. - The English make a landing at Camaret. - Failure of this expedition. - Bombardment of several coastal towns. - Tourville, after appearing on the coast of Catalonia, surrenders at Toulon. - Attempts to land on our shores. - Privateering. - Jean Bart. - Peace of Ryswick.

I

According to information from abroad, the Dutch were to arm thirty-six vessels in 1692, and the English ninety. We assumed that the allies, devoting thirty-six vessels to escorting the merchant fleets, would keep the other ninety in the Channel. The Minister of the Navy estimated that he could gather a roughly equal number on the ocean coasts by bringing eighteen vessels from Toulon to Brest. In the plans drawn up in Paris, it was not only a question of the French navy fighting the allied navies, which, however, constituted a heavy task for the latter; it was intended that our fleet take part in some expedition that could bring great results. After examining various proposals, it was decided that a new effort should be made in favor of James II; this enterprise was to take on important proportions.[179]

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An army embarked in a port in the Channel would be transported, not to Ireland, but to the very soil of England; the troops, landed in the harbor of Dunes, would march on London. It was believed that, faced with the imminence of danger, the English would hasten to recognize James II as king. The execution of this project required that our navy be master of the sea, but there was no doubt in Paris that this result could be achieved. The Ministry of the Navy proposed to put to sea, in the month of April, that is to say, at a time when we assumed that the enemy would not be ready, sixty vessels, which, crossing the Strait of Dover, would anchor at the entrance to the Thames. This fleet, to which successive reinforcements would be sent until the complete completion of our armaments, would find itself, by its very position, in a position to oppose the junction of the forces of Holland and England. In these conditions, the expedition would not encounter any obstacle. This combination, however attractive it appeared, was nevertheless abandoned for fear, it was said in Paris, of objections coming from the navy. It was then decided that the naval army would enter the Channel; it would protect the embarkation of troops which would take place in the small port of La Hougue. In summary, the plan of campaign adopted for the year 1692, included a descent into England, made with twenty thousand men, having at their head Marshal de Bellefonds; James II would accompany the expedition which would land in the south of England. As to the time at which this expedition would take place, two hypotheses presented themselves. If the navy hastened the armaments, and if, on the other hand, it succeeded in stealing knowledge of them from the enemy, it could put to sea, around April 15, a significant part of the Ocean fleet.[180]

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Since the Allied squadrons were still in their ports at that time, it was said in Paris, nothing would prevent the execution of the planned operation. While the naval force was cruising in the Channel, monitoring the enemy's movements, the transport fleet would sail under the escort of Count d'Estrées, who had come from Toulon with eighteen ships. If, on the contrary, we did not have a sufficient number of ships fit to put to sea by April, the expedition would be delayed until we could have our entire force at our disposal, that is, the eighty-eight ships, including the eighteen that Count d'Estrées was to bring from Toulon. The fleet would then set out in search of the enemy to fight him; if a victory made us masters of the sea, the expedition would set sail for its destination. Assuming that the Prince of Orange, upon hearing the news of James II's landing, were to hasten back across the sea, his departure would deprive the French troops operating in Flanders of a formidable enemy; if, on the contrary, the prince remained at the head of his army, it was believed in Paris that he would lose his throne, an event that would be immediately followed by the conclusion of peace between France and England.

We have just seen that the execution of the plan to land in England involved two different approaches. The king adopted the first, which consisted of carrying out this operation during the month of April. The cavalry, artillery, and baggage were to be embarked at Le Havre, and the infantry at the small port of La Hougue. Tourville considered it very difficult to navigate the Channel with a fleet that could, if the promises made by the ministry were kept, number up to eighty-eight vessels, while we had no port on the French coast in which our vessels were assured of shelter.[181]

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He even declared that he would not take the fleet under his command there except on an order from the king. Tourville sensed the futility of these plans, in the development of which no account was taken of the maritime or military difficulties that might arise in their execution. For the glory of France, as well as for his own glory, Tourville asked only to beat the Anglo-Dutch, and no satisfaction would have equaled his if he had been given the opportunity to show his victorious flag in the Channel, or even in the North Sea, but he thought that France, being at war with the two greatest maritime powers of Europe, should guard against an excess of confidence which would no longer be boldness, but temerity. It therefore seemed wise to him, when the time came, that is to say when we had completed our armaments, to keep the army cruising off Ushant, a position which would allow us to follow events and take advantage of all the favorable circumstances which might arise. But the head of the fleet, held in suspicion by the offices of the ministry, was not consulted.

We borrow from the instructions addressed to Tourville the following passages, knowledge of which is necessary to make a reasoned judgment on the campaign of 1692: "His Majesty wants him (Tourville) to set sail on April 25th, in whatever condition the *Soleil-Royal* that he is to mount, with the number of warships, fireships and cargo vessels that will be able to follow him. After leaving Brest, His Majesty wants him to enter the Channel without losing time, to detach immediately from his fleet the finest sailboats to go to meet him as far as the harbor of Le Havre, and to give notice to the Lord of Bonrepaus of his arrival.[182]

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His Majesty wishes him to anchor at the harbor of La Hougue where he will embark, both on the warships and on the ships that will follow him, all the infantry..... His Majesty absolutely wishes him to leave Brest on the said day, April 25, even if he has notice that the enemy will be outside with a number of ships greater than those that will be able to follow him. He will observe, however, in this case, not to detach the fine sail vessels, as ordered above. In case he meets them on his way to La Hougue, His Majesty wants him to fight them in whatever number they may be, to pursue them to their ports, if he defeats them, after having sent a detachment of the army to Le Havre to take the cargo ships, and then lead them to the place where the landing must be made; and if he is at a disadvantage, His Majesty leaves it up to him to save the army as best he can. But, in the event that upon entering the Channel, he learns, either from the reports he receives from Le Havre or from the ships he finds at sea, that the enemy is in the harbor of Saint Helena (Isle of Wight), His Majesty wants him to take steps to surprise them there before going to La Hougue, to attack them there, and to find a way to destroy them there. He recommends that he avoid on this occasion the accidents that caused him to lose the means to attack them there in 1690... "

"I add this word in my own hand to this instruction," wrote the king, at the end of this dispatch, "to tell you that what it contains is my will and that I want it to be observed punctually."[183]

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Tourville must have felt deeply hurt in his honor upon reading these instructions. It is impossible, in fact, not to be struck by the general tone that reigns in this dispatch; no freedom of action is granted to the commander of the fleet; everything is regulated, fixed in advance. The king seems to fear that Tourville will back down from energetic decisions, because the order to fight appears with an insistence that nothing explains. Finally, these instructions contained allusions to various incidents from the campaigns of 1690 and 1691 that were all the more hurtful because they were profoundly unjust. Until then, Pontchartrain had made light work; the time had come to move from words to deeds. The speed of armaments was the essential condition for success; It was up to the ministry offices and the stewards in the ports to deploy the necessary skill and diligence to assemble the personnel, equipment and supplies, without which it was impossible to cope with the armaments. The plan to land in England, carried out in April, included, and this must not be lost sight of, the presence, at the same time, in the Channel, of a considerable force, fixed at sixty vessels. We will now follow the course of events. His Majesty wants, it was stated in the instructions of March 26, that the Sieur de Tourville leaves on April 25, "in whatever condition the *Soleil-Royal* is, which he must embark, with the number of warships, fireships and cargo vessels that will be able to follow him..." However, a few days before the fixed date, the order was given to Tourville to delay his departure. The administration had not yet assembled the number of transport vessels necessary for the embarkation of troops; as for the war fleet, it was far from the figure originally fixed.[184]

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On May 12, the date on which, if preparations had followed the course indicated by the authors of the campaign plan, the landing should have been carried out and the cargo ships returned to our ports, Tourville left Bertheaume harbor with thirty-nine vessels. With the winds blowing between the east and northeast, it was unlikely that he would arrive promptly at La Hougue.

Of the two proposals that had been made regarding the role that the navy should play in the planned landing in England, the first was naturally rejected, since the fleet, instead of putting to sea in April, did not leave Bertheaume harbor until May 12. The second proposal, which included the entry into the Channel of a fleet of eighty-eight vessels, a figure recognized as necessary, from the month of May, to combat the enemy forces, had also to be rejected. Indeed, the Count of Estrées, due to the delays in the arming of his squadron, had not left Toulon until April 8. Since the 28th of the same month, the date on which he left the strait, no news had been received from him. On the other hand, the ministry was counting on assembling seventy vessels in the ports of the Ocean; now, of these seventy vessels, there were barely ten, apart from the thirty-nine commanded by Tourville, whose arming had any chance of being completed during the month of May; as for the others, it was difficult to predict when they would be ready. Personnel were lacking. The measures relating to the raising of sailors had been taken late and their execution had not been the subject of any supervision; finally, soldiers, recruited in the south, who were to enter into the composition of the crews of the Ocean fleet, were, as passengers, on the squadron of Vice-Admiral d'Estrées.[185]

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Thus, nothing remained of the campaign plan as it had been conceived, as the means deemed necessary for its execution did not exist. However, whether they retained a hope in Paris that, moreover, was unjustified, or due to a lack of decision, no counter-order was sent to Tourville; they allowed him to continue his route in the Channel, that is to say, in the center of the enemy forces, with thirty-nine vessels. At La Hougue, stood Jacques II, Marshal de Bellefonds and the Intendant General of the classes Bonrepaus, who represented the Minister of the Navy. Jacques II, the Marshal and the Intendant had complete authority over the fleet. The king, wrote Pontchartrain to Marshal de Bellefonds, "leaves entirely to the king of England, to you and to M. de Bonrepaus, the decision to be taken by Monsieur de Tourville, being well persuaded that it will be the best." There had been a momentary question of recalling Tourville. On May 12, that is to say the day on which he put to sea, the king ordered that the fleet be kept cruising off Ushant until the number of vessels reached seventy. But this order, of which Tourville was not aware, was immediately annulled by the royal decision which placed the naval army under the absolute authority of Jacques II, Marshal de Bellefonds and Bonrepaus.

These three people were aware that the fleet, on the day of its departure, consisted of only thirty-nine vessels, but they wanted to persuade themselves that, since its departure, it had received significant reinforcements, while the dispatches coming from Brest and Paris, far from confirming this opinion, announced new delays in the arming of the divisions which were to join Tourville. On the other hand, the news received from Holland and England made it known that the allies were concentrating at Saint Helena.[186]

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This operation was, by the middle of May, well advanced, if not complete; now, according to calculations made in France, the enemy could muster ninety-two vessels. However, on May 20, a Council of War, assembled at La Hougue, decided that the order would be given to Tourville, in the event that he had fifty-two vessels with him, to search for the enemy and to give battle if he encountered them. Pontchartrain, after approving this resolution, brought it to the attention of the king. Louis XIV, who was besieging Namur, gave his approval to this project, but the letter he wrote on this subject did not reach La Hougue until May 27. It was said that Louis XIV, deceived by information from England, believed that, as soon as the first cannon shot was fired, a part of the English army, secretly devoted to the cause of James II, would join the French fleet. Attempts had been made to achieve this result, but for some time now, Louis XIV and his ministers had had no illusions in this regard. The plot had failed. On May 28, the Council, meeting at La Hougue, seemed to realize that Tourville, if he did not have the forces that were supposed to be his, moreover without any proof, ran the risk of being surrounded by the enemy. Two boats were sent to him; each of them carried orders to Tourville to search for the enemy and to fight him if he was at the head of fifty ships, and, if he did not have them, he was given the freedom to act as he judged appropriate. One of the boats docked the Soleil-Royal on the morning of May 29 at the very moment when the two armies arrived within cannon range.[187]

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While Louis XIV, the Minister of the Navy, and the Council meeting at La Hougue were exchanging futile and useless correspondence, events were moving quickly, and the moment was approaching when France would have to suffer the consequences of the mistakes that had been made. Tourville, having had to struggle for twelve days against contrary winds, was still at the entrance to the English Channel when, on May 26, the winds shifted to the west. Joined the same day by a division of five ships commanded by Lieutenant-General de Villette, he set sail for La Hougue with forty-four ships and a number of transport vessels that he was convoying. Tourville had been kept away from all the schemes that haunted minds at La Hougue and Versailles. None of the numerous dispatches exchanged between these two points had been communicated to him. By the small vessels attached to his fleet, he frequently wrote to the minister, but the latter sent him neither new orders nor information on the forces and position of the enemy. Since the Council, meeting at La Hougue, had received from the king the necessary powers to direct the operations of the fleet, the minister of the navy played only a secondary role, probably happy to be freed, at this price, from all responsibility. No new order, as we have said, having been addressed to Tourville since his departure from the harbor of Bertheaume, the line of conduct that this admiral had to observe was fixed by the instructions dated March 26. These instructions, quoted above, contained the following passage which is worth recalling: "In the event that Mr. de Tourville encounters the enemy on his way to La Hougue, His Majesty wishes him to fight them in whatever number they may be."[188]

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Informed of our plans, and fearing an invasion that would have jeopardized its very existence, the new British government had deployed extreme energy and deployed all the resources a major maritime nation could offer to hasten armaments. While the authors of the campaign plan imposed on the French fleet authoritatively declared that the entire enemy force would not be able to put to sea until June, our adversaries were ready in May, that is, a month earlier. While Tourville struggled against contrary winds, the allies quickly concentrated their forces. On the 26th, when the winds, shifting to the west, allowed Tourville to sail for La Hougue, the Anglo-Dutch, leaving the anchorage of Saint Helena, set out to search for us. The prospect of the landing of James II, at the head of a French army, aroused, on the other side of the strait, very strong emotion, and the ministers of King William, their eyes fixed on the Channel, impatiently awaited news of the English fleet. Admiral Russell, who commanded it, knowing what grave responsibility weighed upon him, was eager to meet our army to fight it. On the 29th of May, at daybreak, the French fleet, having arrived at the height of Cape La Hague, situated at the western extremity of the Cotentin peninsula, was running in an easterly direction, with southwest winds. A light mist covered the horizon; when it dissipated, with the first rays of the sun, the Anglo-Dutch army appeared to leeward. It was eighty-eight ships strong. Given such a disproportion of forces, it was playing into the enemy's hands to fight him with forty-four ships, when we could muster eighty and perhaps more. Could Tourville have escaped the enemy's pursuit? It is difficult to say, but one must believe that he did not for a moment think of attempting it.[189]

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In the instructions addressed to him, he made no secret of the fact that a distrust, hurtful to his honor, was evident on every line; it seemed that the commander of the fleet would be incapable of taking a decisive stand. Tourville, placed at the head of an fleet for the first time in 1689, had won the victory of Bévéziers the following year, and in 1691 had carried out the famous offshore campaign. No one was unaware that he was being accused in Paris of having shown excessive caution during these various campaigns. Tourville felt deeply irritated at the thought that his courage was being questioned; his responsibility being covered by his instructions, he resolved to fight. Here, according to Tourville's correspondence, are the names of the ships that participated in this battle:

Soleil - Royal , comte de Tourville ;
Ambitieux , marquis de Villette ;
Souverain , marquis de Langeron ;
Formidable , marquis d'Amfreville ;
Monarque , marquis de Nesmond ;
Foudroyant , de Relingues ;
Merveilleux , de Gabaret ;
Grand , marquis de Coëtlogon ;
Magnifique , de Pannetier ;
Fulminant , marquis de la Porte ;
Victorieux , d'Amblemont ;
Admirable , de Beaujeu ;
Intrépide , de Sainte - Hermine ;
Saint - Philippe , d'Infreville ;
Aimable , chevalier de Reals ;
Gaillard , chevalier d'Amfreville ;
Content , marquis de Saint - Maure ;
Sérieux , marquis de Blenac ;[190]

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Brillant , commandeur de Combes ;
Henry , de la Roche - Emard ;
Courtisan , de Colbert Saint - Marc ;
Bourbon , de Perinet ;
Courageux , de la Luzerne ;
Apollon , marquis de Rouvroy ;
Saint - Louis , de la Rogue - Persin ;
Excellent , de la Vigerie ;
Prince , de Bagneux ;
Vermandois , de Lévy ; Le Conquérant , de Magnon :
Le Fier , de la Harteloire ;
Tonnant , de Septèmes ;
Terrible , de Seppeville ;
Triomphant , de Châteaumorand ;
Couronne , de Machaut ;
Le Saint - Esprit , de la Galissonnière ;
Illustre , de Combes ;
Fort , chevalier de la Rougère ;
Le Saint - Michel , chevalier de Villars ;
Diamant , chevalier de Feuquières ;
Étendu , de Ricoux ;
Maure , des Angers ;
Perle , de Forbin ;
Ferme , Duquesne - Monnier ;
Fleuron , de Magon .

Lieutenant-General d'Amfreville, who was at the head of the second squadron, positioned himself abeam of the enemy vanguard, and Squadron Leader de Nesmond, who commanded the first division of this squadron, continued to run until the leader of his division arrived alongside the first ship of the Anglo-Dutch army.[191]

191

This maneuver prevented the Allied vanguard from veering off course and putting us between two fires. Similar measures were taken for the main body and the rearguard. Around seven o'clock, the wind having dropped, the two fleets were unable to maintain order. The ships, left to the action of the currents, became entangled, and the battle continued with a series of private engagements. At ten o'clock in the evening, a thick fog enveloped the two fleets, and the firing on both sides ceased. During the night, most of the ships dropped anchor. The Allies had lost two ships: one had blown up and the other had been sunk; the French fleet was intact, but had suffered greatly. The *Soleil-Royal*, upon which five fireships had been successively directed, had only managed to drive them away thanks to the skill of its maneuvers and the dedication of its crew. The French fleet had covered itself in glory by successfully battling the Allied fleet for an entire day, but it was no longer in a position to repeat such an effort. Retreat was necessary.

On the morning of the 30th, nine vessels, having become separated from the fleet, headed for Brest; thirty-five joined the flag of the commander-in-chief, who sailed westward. On the 31st, Tourville, who had set his flag on the *Ambitieux*, entered the Alderney Race with the hope of reaching Saint-Malo. Twenty vessels had already crossed this difficult passage, when the calm and the end of the ebb tide occurring, fifteen vessels, among which was the *Ambitieux*, mounted by the commander-in-chief, were obliged to anchor. The anchors having driven with the tide, these fifteen vessels were brought back.[192]

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Tourville, separated from the bulk of his fleet and surrounded by superior forces, could no longer hope to save them. Three ships anchored at Cherbourg, and the other twelve at La Hougue. The enemy, after futilely driving off the part of the French fleet that had crossed the Alderney Race, returned to Cherbourg and La Hougue. Of the three ships anchored at Cherbourg, two were set ablaze by fire ships, and the third, which had run ashore, by small boats. When the allies appeared in sight of La Hougue, Tourville ordered the ships to be brought ashore; efforts to defend them were in vain; the enemy succeeded in setting them ablaze.

The Battle of La Hougue was a glorious day for the French navy; Admirals, captains, officers, sailors gave the most striking proofs of ability, courage and devotion. Tourville was admired even by his enemies. The commander-in-chief of the allied army, Lord Russell, wrote to him "that he congratulated him on the extreme valour he had shown, in attacking him with such intrepidity and fighting so valiantly with such unequal forces." Admirals Sowhel, Ralph de Laval and Almonde, the first two English, and the third Dutch, publicly praised the courage and skill of their adversaries. In no circumstances had Colbert's work better demonstrated its solidity than on May 29, 1692. If the French fleet had been able, instead of leaving fifteen ships behind, to cross the Alderney Race in its entirety, never would a greater success have been obtained, in a pitched battle, by a fleet having, with its adversaries, such a disproportion of forces. Never, moreover, has one seen better the fate that awaits fleets and armies when, in the direction given to maritime or military operations, the opinion of sailors and soldiers is not taken into account.[193]

193

The plan for the 1692 campaign had been drawn up in Paris by enthusiastic men, dreaming of achieving results hitherto unknown. For these men, who were unaware of the conditions of war at sea, defeating the enemy was nothing if this success did not have, as a corollary, some enterprise whose brilliance made the triumphs of the land army pale in comparison. Tourville, out of excess caution, it was said in Paris, had taken no advantage of the victory at Bévéziers. The officials who were directing the navy, in place of the inexperienced minister chosen by Louis XIV, declared that things would turn out differently in 1692, and they were not afraid to say that Tourville could be forced to be more daring. The loss of the Battle of La Hougue was the result to which their combinations had led. If Tourville had been master of the destiny of his fleet, he would have waited, off Ushant, for the reinforcements that Vice-Admiral d'Estrées and Lieutenant-Generals de Châteaurenault and de la Porte were to bring him; after having gathered all his forces, he would have set out in search of the enemy. What the French fleet had done on May 29 shows what it would have had the right to hope for if it had fought the Anglo-Dutch with eighty-eight ships that we would have had, if the armaments had been well directed. Perhaps then this expedition, to which the navy had been needlessly sacrificed, would have been possible. All too often, in the annals of our navy, we encounter operations conceived and prepared by men unfamiliar with the maritime profession, and which inevitably resulted in setbacks. This is the lesson we sought to draw out by recounting the circumstances that preceded and led to the Battle of La Hougue.

For twenty years, the navy had played a role that had won it public favor; France had complete confidence in it.[194]

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The disaster suffered by our fleet at La Hougue, occurring after a long series of successes, aroused great emotion. The moral effect was therefore considerable; as for the material loss, it had not and could not have any importance in a country that had been able to create a navy so quickly. The king did not place on Tourville the burden of the mistakes committed by him and his Minister of the Navy, Pontchartrain. He only wanted to see the result of the day of May 29, during which forty-four French vessels, fighting against eighty-eight English and Dutch vessels, had inflicted the loss of two vessels on their adversaries. On March 27, 1693, Tourville received the baton of Marshal of France; It should be added that Louis XIV, enlightened by events, placed his full trust in this great sailor from that day on.

II

In May 1693, we find Marshal de Tourville in Brest, at the head of a fleet comprising seventy-one vessels. It had just been learned that a convoy of four hundred sailboats was about to leave England for the Mediterranean, under the protection of an escort whose size was not well known. It was decided that an attempt would be made to seize this convoy. On May 26, Tourville put to sea with seventy-one vessels and twenty-nine light vessels, which he brought to the anchorage of Lagos, at the southern tip of Portugal.[195]

195

On the evening of June 26, the scouts left offshore having signaled the approach of the merchant fleet, the army set sail. The convoy was sighted the next day, the 27th, sailing broadside, with northwesterly winds, escorted by twenty-three English and Dutch vessels; upon sight of the French fleet, it dispersed. Our ships captured prizes, the number of which would have been greater if Lieutenant-General Gabaret, who had command of the light squadron, composed of twenty-two vessels, taken from among the best sailing ships, had not signaled to form line of battle, when he should have chased the convoy without following orders. Lieutenant-General Gabaret wanted to position himself to fight the escort, but the latter, far from thinking of defending itself, covered itself with sails and moved away, followed by a small number of fast-moving ships. However, three vessels, two Dutch and one English, were caught and captured.

After giving up the chase, Tourville set sail to enter the Mediterranean. Detachments of our army captured or destroyed ships belonging to the convoy, which had taken refuge at Santi Petri, Gibraltar, and Malaga; a Dutch vessel, anchored at Gibraltar, was sunk. The result obtained was perhaps not commensurate with the means employed; nevertheless, judging by the complaints made by the merchants of England and Holland, the trade of our enemies suffered serious damage. "Within living memory," says Macaulay, "no one had seen in London such sadness and agitation as that which seized the city on the day the news of the Lagos Bay meeting arrived. Merchants were seen, says an eyewitness, leaving the Exchange as pale as if they had been condemned to death."[196]

196

The merchants, affected by this event, delegated some of their number to deliver to the Queen, William III being on the continent at the time, an address in which their grievances were formulated. Public opinion was particularly harsh on the admirals, whose mission it was to monitor the Brest fleet; how, it was said, had they not noticed that it had put to sea? Vice-Admiral d'Estrées, having left Toulon in May with twenty-two ships, had blockaded the town of Roses, besieged by the Duke of Noailles, from the sea. On June 10, after the capitulation of this place, he set sail to effect his junction with the fleet of Brest, but, learning that the latter had entered the Mediterranean, he joined Marshal de Tourville at Toulon.

Ninety-three vessels, sixty lower-ranking vessels were gathered; the city of Toulon had never seen and never again saw such a deployment of forces. This figure of ninety-three vessels included thirty-five vessels, carrying forty to fifty-eight cannons; of the other fifty-eight, the number of guns ranged from sixty to one hundred and four. Of the seventy-one vessels with which Tourville had anchored in the harbor of Toulon, forty returned to Brest and twenty to Rochefort at the end of 1693. While the entirety of our naval forces was in the Mediterranean, the English attempted to destroy Saint-Malo. A squadron appeared before this city, bringing with it a large vessel loaded with fireworks and flammable materials. For several days, bombs were thrown at the city. On November 3, the infernal machine, as the incendiary ship was called, set in motion; carried by the wind and the current, it ran aground before reaching a short distance from the walls. Shortly after, the ship blew up.[197]

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It is clear from the letters written about this event by the Duke of Chaulnes, governor of the province, that the infernal machine had caused a lot of noise and little harm.

The Lagos affair had exasperated English commerce. William resolved to attempt some enterprise that could, through the significance of the results, satisfy public opinion. When he returned from Flanders in 1693, the season was too advanced to operate with any chance of success on our coasts, but it was decided that the following year, the port of Brest would be attacked by land and sea. Preparations for the expedition were made in the greatest secrecy. Tourville having left Brest on April 24, 1694, with fifty-three vessels, heading for the Mediterranean, his departure, leaving the port stripped of sailors and soldiers, favored England's plans. Brest was almost defenseless on the land side and even on the sea side. The English, exactly informed about this situation, had no doubt about the success of this enterprise. In April 1694, the English fleet could enter the inlet, cross it and anchor in the harbor of Brest, without being exposed to very serious risks. Having landing troops, it would have easily taken control of both sides of the inlet. Fortunately, the Court of Saint-Germain informed Louis XIV of William's plans for our great ocean port. It was, it is said, the Duke of Marlborough who committed this treason against his country, not out of devotion to the Stuart cause, but out of hatred for the ministry whose fall he ardently desired; finally, the Duke hoped that the failure of the expedition would draw attention to his person and lead to his obtaining a military command. This unexpected circumstance would not have been enough to preserve Brest, if the expedition had left at the beginning of May, as had been decided by the British government.[198]

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The fleet was ready in good time, but bad weather kept it anchored. Louis XIV, as soon as he knew for certain the dangers facing Brest, informed Vauban, who was inspecting the Normandy coast. Probably not understanding the need to act with extreme diligence, the king simply ordered him to proceed to the threatened town once he had completed his mission. Finally, on May 10, Vauban received the order to go to Brest; as soon as he arrived, the illustrious engineer set to work fortifying the city and both sides of the inlet. Vauban had the most extensive powers, but he had no troops, little money and very few resources in terms of material. It was only in the naval arsenal that he found means of action. "The navy," he wrote, "is a universal resource which is of help to us without which we could only be in a state of complete suffering, because there is hardly anything left in the place other than what the navy provides. Up to now I have only found people of good will there; the corps of soldiers seems very good to me, and I have a good opinion of them. The officers of the navy, who are not their natural leaders, esteem them and speak well of them, and this testimony is worth a lot." Vauban applied himself, with particular attention, to fortifying Bertheaume and Camaret and especially this last point, as if he had a presentiment that the descent would take place there. On June 16, and we can see what would have happened if the enemy had appeared at the beginning of May, we had not completed the work deemed necessary; moreover, some of the troops announced by the Minister of War were missing. However, the situation had changed, and the skillful arrangements made by Vauban allowed us to fight the English with a chance of success.[199]

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Batteries manned by naval gunners stood on both sides of the narrows; squadron leaders Langeron and Infreville commanded, the former the north coast, and the latter the south coast. The defense of Camaret and Bertheaume was ensured by troops supported by very solid fortifications.

The English fleet, when it left Portsmouth, included the ships under Admiral Berkeley, whose objective was Brest, and the squadron commanded by Admiral Russell, which was to sail into the Mediterranean. Off Ushant, Admiral Russell set sail for his destination, and Lord Berkeley anchored between Bertheaume and Camaret. The enemy immediately came to recognize this last point. The report made to Admiral Berkeley and to the commander-in-chief of the expeditionary force, Lord Talmash, did not conceal that the landing would be difficult to carry out. But Lord Berkeley and Lord Talmash would not believe it; they were both full of confidence in the information given by the government, which probably had not been aware of the work carried out since the arrival of Vauban. The next day, the 17th, around eleven o'clock, a very thick fog, which reigned in the morning, having prevented them from setting sail earlier, the ships, called upon to protect the descent, entered the bay of Camaret under very violent fire from our batteries, to which the English ships, as soon as they were anchored, responded vigorously. The Admiral and Lord Talmash, surprised by the resistance encountered by the English ships, wondered whether it would not be wise to abandon the expedition, but, still convinced that Brest was undefended, they wanted to carry out the mission with which they were charged and the order was given to the ships of the squadron, carrying the expeditionary force, to head towards land.[200]

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The first troops disembarked were received with such vigor that there was a moment of hesitation in the flotilla heading towards the coast. Soon the boats, which had not yet landed, put to sea, a maneuver promptly imitated by the ships charged with protecting the landing. The losses suffered by the English, on land and on ships, were twelve hundred men killed or wounded; nearly six hundred prisoners remained in our hands. A galley carrying soldiers was sunk by a bomb, and a Dutch frigate, which had run aground, lowered its flag. Such was the result of an expedition on which William counted on to impress public opinion. The English, probably wanting to repair the defeat they had suffered before Camaret, bombarded Le Havre, Dieppe, and Dunkirk. The wooden town of Dieppe was burned; the other two fortresses suffered no serious damage.

Tourville, as we mentioned above, had left Brest on April 24, heading for the Mediterranean; after crossing the Strait of Gibraltar, he had headed for the coast of Catalonia to support the operations of the army commanded by the Duke of Noailles. The latter was about to lay siege to Barcelona, which our fleet was to attack from the sea, when word reached us of the imminent arrival of Admiral Russell with considerable forces. Under these conditions, the outcome of the siege was becoming doubtful, as the town could be supplied by sea. Marshal de Noailles, abandoning this project, Tourville received the order to return to Toulon. In 1693, Louis XIV wanted to make a new attempt in favor of Jacques II [James II].[201]

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Vessels were armed at Toulon, and ships were prepared in the Channel and Ocean ports on which the troops were to be embarked. Despite the precautions taken by the French government, England learned the purpose of the expedition. William pursued the Stuart partisans with extreme severity, and through well-planned military measures, he made any uprising impossible. Louis XIV was forced to abandon this enterprise.

Resuming their operations against our main maritime centers, the English bombarded Dunkirk, Calais, Granville, and Saint-Malo. The following year, they bombarded Calais again, then Saint-Martin-de-Ré and Olonne. Landings took place on the islands of Houat, Hédic and Groix. The clever measures taken by the government prevented the enemy from undertaking anything serious on our coasts. Such was the conduct of England until the conclusion of peace in 1697. Having no more naval battles to fight, this power wanted to use the considerable forces at its disposal to bring ruin and devastation to our territory. It was the old system of maritime warfare which was reappearing, but it had not met the hopes of the English. Times, in fact, had changed. With small ships, rowing, when it was calm or the breeze was against it, it was possible, by arriving unexpectedly on a point of the enemy coast, to make a landing, take a town, ransom it and even destroy it before the enemy was able to oppose it. It was not the same with the large ships making up the fleets which held the sea at the end of the 18th century, any expedition requiring preparations which rarely remained secret.[202]

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On the other hand, the creation of standing armies and the presence, at the center of each of Europe's maritime powers, of a force exerting its influence over all parts of the territory had completely changed the defensive situation. Attacks now had a chance of success only if major means were employed, and even then, they could hardly count on a successful outcome.

Since the Battle of La Hougue, we have been concerned only with damaging the enemy's trade; the Lagos affair itself has no other purpose. In 1694, Tourville, sent to the coast of Spain to support the operations of the Duke of Noailles, received the order to return to Toulon as soon as news reached Paris of the arrival in the Mediterranean of an Anglo-Dutch fleet. Barely a few warships put to sea. Our officers fought with remarkable energy against superior forces. In 1694, the frigate *La Bouffonne* was surrendered to six Dutch ships, the weakest of which was of his strength. The following year, the *Trident*, of forty-two, and the *Content*, of fifty-four, attacked by a division of six ships, only surrendered at the last minute. These battles were rare; warships only left our ports to carry out essential missions, and they were ordered to avoid any unequal combat. We have adopted a method of war to which the Minister of the Navy devotes all the resources at his disposal. It is not only individuals who are engaged in privateering, but the State itself takes part in this system of war. The King lends to commerce, under certain conditions, warships on which officers of the military navy are authorized to embark.[203]

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Military ranks were awarded to reward the noble deeds of privateers. Jean Bart is the most illustrious embodiment of these brave, skilled sailors, who, during the reign of Louis XIV, were the terror of enemy commerce. Jean Bart, from an old Dunkirk family, was the son and grandson of sailors who had commanded privateers. He joined the navy early and was sailing on Dutch ships. When, on April 7, 1672, France and England declared war on Holland, Jean Bart immediately returned to Dunkirk; two years later, at the age of twenty-four, he commanded a privateer. His reputation grew rapidly. In 1676, commanding the Palme, a ship with twenty-four cannons and a crew of one hundred and fifty men, Jean Bart boarded the *Neptune*, a thirty-two-gun Dutch vessel. Returning to Dunkirk with this ship, he was acclaimed by the population; news of this exploit reached Paris. Appreciating, as he should have, the services rendered by the privateers, and wanting, on the other hand, to encourage the sailors who commanded them, Louis XIV had a gold chain, to which was attached a medal bearing his image, presented to the valiant captain of the Palme. Until the Peace of Nijmegen, signed in 1678, Jean Bart held the sea, capturing numerous prizes, and returning to port only to repair or resupply the ship he was riding.

On January 5, 1679, Jean Bart, appointed lieutenant, received the order to hunt Moroccan corsairs with two ships, a mission he successfully fulfilled. In 1689, when the War of the League of Augsburg broke out, Jean Bart, a frigate captain for several years, left Le Havre with the *Chevalier de Forbin*, escorting a convoy of fourteen merchant ships.[204]

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Jean Bart, who had command of the two ships, was armed with the twenty-eight-gun *Railleuse* and the twenty-four-gun *Jeux* with the *Chevalier de Forbin*. On May 22, abeam of the Casquets, the French ships encountered two English ships, one with forty-eight guns and the other with forty-two. Determined to defend his convoy, Jean Bart not only prepared to fight, but also made arrangements to emerge victorious from the ensuing battle. Two merchant ships, equipped with cannons, received men borrowed from the convoy ships. The captains of these ships were to attack the forty-two-gun vessel without getting too involved and prolong the battle until our two ships had captured the largest enemy ship. The *Railleuse* and the *Jeux* wanted to approach the *Sans Pareil*, that was the name of the English ship of forty-eight guns, but fortune betrayed the two French captains. When the calm came, the boarding could not take place and a furious artillery and musketry fight began. Shortly after, the enemy fire weakened and the surrender of the *Sans-Pareil* seemed close. Unfortunately, the captains of the two merchant ships, shrinking from the honorable role entrusted to them, set sail to join the convoy. The second ship, coming to join its fire to that of the *Sans-Pareil*, the *Railleuse* and the *Jeux* were overwhelmed and forced, after a stubborn defense, to lower their flag. The French frigates, razed from front to rear, had lost three-quarters of their complement; Jean Bart was hit in the head, and the *Chevalier de Forbin* had received six wounds. On their arrival at Plymouth, the governor, forgetting what he owed to officers captured after a fight, had them imprisoned. Jean Bart and the *Chevalier de Forbin* did not remain long in the hands of the English.[205]

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On June 12, escaping from their prison, they embarked, taking with them a Flemish surgeon and two cabin boys, in a small boat without sails and equipped with only two oars. The boat reached the coast of France a few leagues from Saint-Malo. Jean Bart and the *Chevalier de Forbin* were rewarded for their fine conduct with the rank of ship captain. The former soon returned to sea, and during the year 1689, he captured numerous prizes from the English and the Dutch.

Jean Bart's role elevates; it is no longer a vessel, but a division that he commands, and the results obtained are in proportion to the forces entrusted to him. On July 26, 1691, Jean Bart leaves Dunkirk, deceiving the cruise, strong of thirty-seven vessels, which is blocking the port. He seizes, the next day, four English ships and the two warships, one of forty cannons and the other of fifty, which escort them. After the day of La Hougue, the allies blockade our ports and, in particular, the port of Dunkirk, on which they constantly have their eyes fixed. Jean Bart passes through the blockade squadrons and makes prizes. The year 1693 is marked by a bold raid carried out on the city of Newcastle, in reprisal for the enemy's conduct on our coasts. In 1694, Jean Bart, mounting a ship of fifty-four cannons and having under his command six vessels, left Dunkirk to escort a merchant fleet, coming from the north, which was bringing wheat to France. To understand the importance of the mission entrusted to Jean Bart, we must say that the rise, every day increasing, of the price of wheat in France, had become for the government a subject of the most serious preoccupation.[206]

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On June 29, a large merchant fleet, sailing under the escort of eight Dutch warships, was sighted. Jean Bart learned that the ships in sight were those he was tasked with escorting. This fleet, which had left without waiting for him, had been captured by the Dutch, who were heading for the Texel, from which, at that moment, they were not far. The escort's attack was decided upon. "I assembled all the captains of the ships in my squadron," wrote Jean Bart, "and after holding a council of war, where combat was resolved, I boarded the rear-admiral, mounted with fifty-eight cannons, which I boarded after half an hour of fighting."I killed or wounded one hundred and fifty men: I lost on this occasion only three men and twenty-seven wounded. The *Mignon* took one of these eight ships, with fifty cannons. The *Fortuné* took another with thirty cannons; the other five remaining of the eight, one with fifty-eight cannons, another with fifty-four, two with fifty, and one with forty, fled after seeing me capture their rear-admiral. I brought thirty ships of the fleet here, which are in the harbor." Jean Bart, by retaking this fleet, which had fallen into the hands of the enemy, had rendered a signal service to France, threatened with famine. A Knight of Saint-Louis on April 19, he received letters of nobility for his fine conduct in the battle of June 29.

When the English came in 1695 to bombard Dunkirk, Jean Bart took command of one of the forts most exposed to enemy fire. On May 17, 1696, he left Dunkirk, which was tightly blockaded, with a division consisting of seven ships and two fireships. On June 17, he drove off a merchant fleet of more than a hundred sail, and captured five frigates that were escorting it. [207]

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This battle was fought in full view of twelve Dutch warships; as they approached, Jean Bart recognized the impossibility of holding his prizes. He burned the merchant ships and four warships; on the fifth, whose guns were spiked, he took his prisoners. These various operations, quickly conducted, were barely completed when the enemy arrived within cannon range. The Dutch, who greatly outnumbered us in terms of the number and rank of their ships, drove off the French division, but without success. While Jean Bart captured the five escort frigates, privateers from Dunkirk, who accompanied us, engaging in raids on the merchant fleet, had taken numerous prizes. The damage suffered by the enemy was therefore considerable. In the same year 1696, Jean Bart, passing through the blockade squadron, led to Danzig the Prince of Conti, competitor of the Elector of Saxony to the throne of Poland. He remained, with his squadron, at the disposal of the Prince. The latter, having renounced his candidacy, returned to France, and made this second crossing no less successfully than the first. Jean Bart died at Dunkirk in 1702, at an age when one could believe that he would still render great services to his country. He was only fifty-two years old. We will quickly summarize his brilliant and all too short career. Jean Bart showed himself, as soon as he exercised his first command, to be an incomparable privateer, displaying as much bravery as intelligence and activity. He did not only capture merchant ships, he attacked and took warships. His name, very popular in his country, where he enjoyed a great reputation, was known in Paris; such was his situation when peace, concluded in 1678, came to stop the course of his exploits. War broke out in 1689.[208]

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Two years later, Jean Bart had three ships under his command: six in 1694 and seven the following year. He captured merchant fleets after capturing or putting to flight the enemy divisions tasked with escorting them. Successively lieutenant, frigate captain, and captain, he became squadron leader. Jean Bart holds a prominent place among the men who distinguished the reign of Louis XIV. The historian Faulconnier, one of Jean Bart's contemporaries, paints the following portrait of this great sailor. "He was above average in stature; his body was well-built, robust, and capable of withstanding all the fatigues of the sea. He had well-formed features, blue eyes, a beautiful complexion, blond hair, and a happy and quite rebellious countenance." He had a great deal of common sense, a clear and solid mind, and a firm and always consistent valour. He was sober, vigilant and intrepid; as quick to take his stand as he was cool-headed in giving his orders in combat, where he was always seen with that presence of mind so rare and so necessary on such occasions. He knew his trade perfectly well, and he carried it out with such selflessness, approval and glory, that he owed his fortune and his elevation only to his ability and valor.

At the end of 1696, squadron leader de Pointis built up a privateering force that reached considerable proportions. Pointis, who had his flag on a ship of eighty-four guns, left Brest on June 7, 1697. The forces under his command amounted to more than twenty vessels, among which were seven ships. During the month of May, the squadron anchored off the city of Cartagena on the coast of America. It was joined at this anchorage by several ships manned by buccaneers. The expeditionary force embarked on the squadron, which was joined by troops brought by Ducasse, governor of Santo Domingo, captured the city, on which a contribution of nine million was imposed.[209]

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The ship from Saint-Domingue captured the city, imposing a tax of nine million francs. Unfortunately, it was impossible to prevent the buccaneers from pillaging the city. The landing in this unhealthy country, having resulted in the loss of a large number of men and encumbering the ships with sick people, Pointis hastened to put back to sea. Several ships, whose captains and most of the officers were dead or sick, lost sight of the squadron. On August 24, an English division, five ships strong, was sighted to leeward. Although, due to the large number of sick people on board our ships, the batteries could not be used, Pointis allowed the enemy to approach, and the action began. However, recognizing the need to arrive at his destination as quickly as possible, he resumed his route to Brest towards evening, where he anchored on August 29. Among those who particularly distinguished themselves in this privateering war are Captain de Forbin, Squadron Leader de Coetlogon, and Lieutenant-General de Nesmond.

D'Iberville, who had served in Canada with the greatest distinction since 1686, received orders in 1697 to seize Fort Bourbon in Hudson Bay, which we had captured from the English and which they had retaken. Four ships, although he only held the rank of frigate captain, were placed under his command. On September 5, d'Iberville anchored about two leagues from Fort Bourbon, with only one ship, the one he was on board; the other ships of his division, stopped by the ice, had not been able to follow him. On the 6th, he sighted three English ships maneuvering to enter the bay. D'Iberville set sail, went to the enemy ships and fought them with such vigor and skill that he sank one of these ships, captured another, and put the third to flight.[210]

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A gale having driven the ship he commanded and the English prize ashore, his situation became very critical when, fortunately, he was joined by the three ships that had remained behind. A few days later, d'Iberville disembarked his crews, laid siege to Fort Bourbon, and forced it to capitulate on September 15. During the course of this war, battles had been fought not only at sea, but in Italy, Spain, Holland, the Netherlands, and on the Rhine. France had gloriously fought this struggle against all of Europe. Marshal Luxembourg had won the victories of Fleurus, Steinkerque, and Nerwinde over the Allies. In Italy, Catinat had won the battles of Staffarde and Marsaille over the Duke of Savoy. But to obtain such results, we had had to make an immense effort on land and at sea which had exhausted France. Peace had become necessary; it was signed at Turin with Savoy in 1696, at Ryswick on 20 September 1697 with England, Spain, Holland, and on 30 October of the same year with the Emperor and the Empire.[211]

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BOOK IX

War of the Spanish Succession. - Disaster at Vigo. - Battle of four French ships against an English division. - Cruises of Captains de Forbin, Duquesne-Monnier, and de Saint-Pol. - Engagement of a French division with five Dutch ships. - Battle of Malaga. - Loss of five ships belonging to the squadron blockading Gibraltar. - The Allies lay siege to Toulon. - The English capture Minorca. - Cruises of Squadron Leader de Forbin and Captain Duguay-Trouin. - Capture of Rio de Janeiro. - Cruise of Captain Cassard. - Peace is signed.

I

Barely a few years had passed since the signing of the Treaty of Ryswick when war broke out again. Charles II, King of Spain, died without issue on 1 November 1700, leaving his crown to the Duke of Anjou, grandson of Louis XIV. The King of France, after consulting his Council, accepted the will of Charles II. This decision, which placed a French prince on the throne of Spain, caused deep discontent in all the Courts, which feared the aggrandizement of the House of Bourbon. Emperor Leopold and the King of England would have immediately declared war on France, if the former had not found himself without resources, from a financial point of view, as a result of the long war he had waged against France and the Ottoman Porte, and if the latter had not realized that the British Parliament would not agree to increase the public debt and sacrifice trade to satisfy the hatred that William II bore for Louis XIV.[212]

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The King of England, the States of Holland, the Elector of Bavaria, the Court of Lisbon, and the Duke of Savoy recognized Philip V. It was at a time when there was hope of maintaining peace that the imprudent conduct of Louis XIV made war inevitable. Upon learning that we were imposing on the Duke of Mantua the obligation to receive a French garrison in his capital, Leopold sent troops into Italy, under the command of Prince Eugene, with orders to commence hostilities. While the fighting was going on in Italy, James II died at Saint-Germain, and Louis XIV, contrary to the advice of his Council, proclaimed the son of the deceased prince as King of England, under the name of James III. Now, France, by the Treaty of Ryswick, had recognized this quality to William. Not only William, but the English people, considered the decision taken by Louis XIV as an insult. The British Parliament, whose hesitations the king had not been able to overcome until then, voted for all the proposals presented by the government. In 1702, we were at war with England, Germany and Holland, powers which were soon joined by Prussia, Portugal and Savoy. France was not in a position to sustain a new struggle, at sea, against England and Holland combined. Our country, exhausted by long years of war, devoted its last resources to the army. The few years which had elapsed since the Peace of Ryswick had been, as far as the navy was concerned, considered not as a favourable circumstance for preparing for war, but as an opportunity for making economies.[213]

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The English navy, on the contrary, was in the most flourishing state; William had considerably increased his kingdom's naval forces. At the time of the declaration of war, England possessed nearly three hundred ships, among which were one hundred and seventy vessels of the first to fifth rank. Under these conditions, we had to act with great prudence and skill. However, these were not the qualities that distinguished the people, outside the navy, who had the command of our naval forces.

The beginning was not favorable to us. Vice-Admiral de Châteaurenault was escorting, with fifteen French ships and three Spanish vessels, a convoy of galleons coming from Mexico. This fleet had orders to go to Cadiz, but this port being blockaded by an Anglo-Dutch army, fifty ships strong, under the command of Admiral Rooke, Châteaurenault, at the request made to him by the Spanish admiral, went to Vigo. The commander of the French forces, considering it a duty not to move away before the loading of the galleons was safe, and supposing, on the other hand, that he would be attacked by superior forces, established, at the entrance of the pass, a jetty, and he set to work on the construction of batteries intended to defend the ends. Finally, ships embedded inside and at a short distance from the jetty, were in position to take enfilade the vessels wanting to force the entrance. Admiral Rooke quickly knew the position where the galleons were and the strength of the escort. Leaving half his forces before Cadiz, he headed for Vigo with twenty-five ships, and appeared on October 22 at the entrance, while our defensive preparations were not completely completed. The allies had attempted an attack by land on Cadiz, but beaten by the Spaniards, they had re-embarked.[214]

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The English admiral, if he had only ships, could have suffered a serious setback by attacking us, but the troops at his disposal constituted an advantage in his favor that he knew how to take advantage of. The English soldiers, landed, took the batteries erected to defend the entrance to the harbor from the rear and took control of them. Having achieved this important result, Admiral Rooke, taking advantage of a favorable wind, sailed into the channel with all his ships. The jetty, as we have said, not being completely finished, did not withstand the impact. With the exception of a few vessels, such as the *Fort*, of seventy-four, bearing the flag of Châteaurenault, the French squadron was composed only of small vessels; two had only forty-six guns and one forty-two. The Spanish had three vessels, one of seventy and two of fifty-four. The enemy vessels were of a larger size than ours. After a very lively fight, Châteaurenault, judging that the struggle was unequal, ordered the evacuation of the ships of the squadron and their surrender to the flames. His orders could not be completely executed, and only five vessels were set on fire. The Anglo-Dutch seized the others and seven galleons. The cargo of some of the galleons had been put ashore and directed into the interior under the skillful and energetic direction of Renau d'Eliçagaray.

The success of the mission entrusted to Châteaurenault was at least problematic; it would be more accurate to say that it was left to chance. The departure of the galleons had been announced for a long time, and no power was unaware of the port to which they were heading. The Anglo-Dutch blockaded Cadiz with considerable forces, and numerous ships were on observation from that point to the Isles of Scilly.[215]

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Admiral Rooke also promptly learned of the arrival of the galleons at Vigo, whose harbor, through singular negligence on the part of the Spanish, was not defended. The Court of Madrid, after this event, changed the method followed until then for sending gold from Mexico and Peru to Europe. The formation of galleon fleets was stopped and the order was given to make only small convoys, departing irregularly and therefore no longer attracting the enemy's attention to the same degree as before. Captain Ducasse, commanding the ship *L'Heureux*, led one of these convoys to Spain, consisting of a small number of galleons, the departure of which had been kept secret. A few fortunate actions did not make us forget the loss of the fifteen vessels, captured or burned at Vigo, but they honored our officers and showed that they were not intimidated by the unfortunate state of our navy and the extraordinary development given by England to its naval forces. Captain Ducasse, with four vessels, *L'Heureux*, which he was sailing, *the Agréable*, the *Phénix* and the *Apollon*, captains de Rency, de Poudens and de Muin, was escorting several ships carrying troops to Cartagena, on the coast of America, when he was chased, on August 29, by seven vessels, placed under the command of Vice-Admiral Bembow. The English being to windward, allowed the French division which had taken the tail of the convoy to arrive; the enemy, after an engagement of several hours, ceased fire and kept to wind. Admiral Bembow renewed his attack on September 1st, but our ships forced him to withdraw again. On the 4th, a third engagement took place in which the Breda, which Admiral Bembow was riding, was badly mistreated. The English division, losing hope of attacking us, returned to Jamaica.[216]

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Admiral Bembow, unwilling to admit that his division, seven ships strong, had been repulsed by Captain Ducasse's four ships, claimed that he had been abandoned. Of the seven captains, six, including his flag captain, were brought before a court martial.

Captain de Forbin, sent to the Adriatic with four ships to prevent the imperial troops from receiving supplies by sea, fulfilled this mission with the greatest success. However, as he used methods regarded as very severe towards the neutrals, whom Louis XIV was keen to protect, he was recalled to France. Captain Duquesne-Monnier, his successor, learned that the city of Aquileia, in Friuli, located about seven leagues from the coast, contained large quantities of food intended for the imperial army. Although he had only two ships and a few boats, he decided to march on this city with part of his crews. This extremely bold enterprise was crowned with complete success. The landing force captured Aquileia, which the garrison, probably believing itself to be in the presence of superior forces, abandoned. Duquesne-Monnier took what he could carry and set the rest on fire. Captain de Saint-Pol, cruising in the Channel with four frigates, encountered, on April 23, 1703, a convoy escorted by the fifty-man ship, the Salisbury, and two frigates. The French division, which was to windward, let it arrive and immediately attacked the English. After a fierce fight, the ship and one of the frigates remained in our hands: the greater part of the convoy was captured and taken to Dunkirk.[217]

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After a short stay in this port, spent repairing damage to his division, the Chevalier de Saint-Pol put to sea with the Salisbury, which he had taken command of, and three frigates. On June 22, the French division chased a convoy escorted by four warships. Two of these ships were taken by boarding, and a third, which had just been struck by one of ours, exploded. The boarding ship, the *Adroit*, captained by the Seine, suffered such damage that, shortly afterward, it sank, taking with it its brave captain and most of the crew. Squadron Leader Coëtlogon, traveling from Toulon to Brest with five vessels, saw, off the entrance to the Tagus, a merchant fleet, comprising more than a hundred sails, which was making its way under the protection of five English and Dutch warships. One of the escort ships was sunk and the others lowered their flag; the convoy could not be reached. In 1704, we find the Chevalier de Saint-Pol cruising in the North Sea. On May 19, he captured a warship and six merchant ships, and on October 22, his division captured three warships and eleven merchant ships. Unfortunately, this valiant and skillful officer died in this last incident.

The Anglo-Dutch, making very great preparations to support the pretensions of Archduke Charles to the crown of Spain, Louis XIV resolved to assemble a fleet powerful enough to oppose the designs of the allies. The ports of Brest and Toulon received orders to armaments, and to bring, in these operations, the greatest activity. The Count of Toulouse, Admiral of France, appointed to the command of the naval fleet in formation, left Brest, on May 6, with twenty-three vessels, to go to Toulon.[218]

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When the English, who intended to intercept the Brest squadron, arrived on the coast of Brittany, our ships were entering Cadiz. After a short stay in this port, the Count of Toulouse put to sea again, and anchored, during the month of June, in the harbor of Toulon. The squadron being prepared in this port was not ready; was this unfortunate result due to the negligence of the port authorities, or should it be attributed, as has been said, to the ill will of the minister? If the Count of Toulouse combined his position as Admiral of France with distinguished service, he acquired an authority whose effects the Minister of the Navy would probably have been the first to feel. This is what Jerome of Pontchartrain did not want, and he was then accused of having, for personal gain, directed, with calculated slowness, the armaments of the port of Toulon. In any case, the delay in the availability of the fleet had the consequence of allowing the allied forces, which we could have fought separately, to effect their junction. The French fleet sailed on July 22; it consisted of fifty vessels, frigates and fire ships. The Count of Toulouse had Victor-Marie d'Estrées, Marshal of Cœuvres, with him as advisor. The senior personnel of the fleet included, in addition, Lieutenant-Generals de Villette Mursay, de Langeron, de Coëtlogon and de Relingue, the squadron leaders d'Infreville, de Belle-Isle, Bailli de Lorraine, de Pointis, de Sepville and de la Harteloire. All these general officers were tried men; the same could be said of most of the captains who, having served for many years, had seen many battles. On August 22, the Anglo-Dutch army, commanded in chief by Admiral Rooke, was sighted; it consisted of fifty-seven vessels, eighteen frigates, bomb galliots and fire ships.[219]

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On August 24, the enemy, who was to windward, let the French fleet draw up in line of battle bear down. The action began around ten o'clock in the morning and lasted until nightfall; the allies then held the wind and moved away. There had been a vigorous fight on both sides; two Dutch vessels, part of the vanguard, had been sunk. Under these conditions, given that we were fighting with fifty vessels against fifty-seven, the enemy himself had to recognize that the day's success belonged to us. We had suffered very significant losses. Squadron leaders Bailli de Lorraine, de Belle-Isle, and ship captains Phélypeaux and Châteaurenault were among the dead; Lieutenant-General de Relingue, whose leg had been blown off by a cannonball, died the next day. The Count of Toulouse and Captain Ducasse had been wounded, the former very slightly. In the Councils of the French fleet, it was asked whether we should not pursue the enemy and attack them as soon as a favorable opportunity arose, but this plan was abandoned. The Count of Toulouse must have regretted it, because it was learned later that a certain number of English vessels had exhausted their ammunition. The two fleet, after remaining in each other's presence for forty-eight hours, separated. The French touched at Malaga, then returned to Toulon: the Anglo-Dutch army crossed the strait, after having thrown troops and supplies into the fortress of Gibraltar, which Admiral Rooke had seized without a blow on August 4, 1704, on behalf of Archduke Charles. There were barely a hundred men to defend this important position.

The day of August 24, honorable for our arms, produced only a very small result.[220]

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"This action," says Marshal Berwick in his memoirs, "only served to restrain the Catalans from their duty this year, and to give the Count of Toulouse a reputation." There was no question of taking Gibraltar from the English; the only measure taken with regard to this place shows how thoughtless was the direction given to our naval forces. Squadron Leader Pointis received the order to blockade Gibraltar with thirteen ships; now, the English having a considerable fleet on the coasts of Spain and in the Tagus, it was certain that our squadron would be attacked by forces that would be difficult to resist. Not only were these observations, presented by squadron leader Pointis, not received, but he did not even obtain permission to cruise outside the strait, a position in which he would have been safer. In March 1705, eight ships of the blockade squadron, driven out by bad weather, had put to sea, and there remained at anchor only five ships, among which was the *Magnifique*, which Pointis was sailing on, when Vice-Admiral Lake was seen heading towards the bay with twenty-three ships. As soon as our lookouts heard the enemy, the cables were cut and the five ships gave chase under full sail, but the English managed to reach them. The *Arrogant*, the *Ardent* and the *Marquis*, after a vigorous defence, lowered their flags; The *Magnifique* and the *Lys* were driven ashore and set ablaze by their crews.

After the Battle of Malaga, we no longer have to record any encounters between our fleets and those of the allies. In 1705, we built up large-scale armaments, but, in the face of the considerable forces available to the enemy in the Ocean and the Mediterranean, our squadrons did not put to sea.[221]

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The following year, the Count of Toulouse appeared before Barcelona with thirty ships to support the operations of the troops besieging the city. However, upon learning that Admiral Showel had entered the Mediterranean with superior forces, he returned to Toulon, obeying his instructions forbidding him to risk an unequal battle. The English, masters of the sea, threw troops into Barcelona and seized the island of Minorca, which the French recaptured shortly afterward in a successful coup. In 1706, the fortunes of war were against Spain and France. Marshal Villeroi lost the bloody Battle of Ramillies, and Philip V was forced to leave Madrid, where his rival, Archduke Charles, was proclaimed king. Louis XIV, fearing greater misfortunes, made urgent steps to conclude a peace treaty, but the allies having set unacceptable conditions, France made new efforts to continue the war. The famous victory of Almanza, won on April 25, 1707, by Marshal Berwick, restored Philip V to the throne of Spain, at the same time as Villars and Vendôme defeated the enemy on the Rhine and in Flanders. The allies, wanting to take revenge for these failures, formed the plan to penetrate our country by the Dauphiné. France, thus taken from behind, would have been exposed, if success crowned this enterprise, to the greatest dangers. With an easily understandable aim, the Anglo-Dutch insisted very strongly that the objective of this campaign should be the siege of Toulon, our great port on the Mediterranean. This plan was kept very secret, and in Paris, despite warnings from Italy, people refused to believe it. As soon as the enemy's movements had clearly indicated his intentions, the entire population lent its assistance to the troops in repairing the fortifications which were falling into ruin.[222]

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The navy, commanded by Lieutenant-General de Langeron, placed cannons and mortars in the forts and erected batteries wherever the fleet's guns could be usefully employed. The gunners and marines were called upon to man the guns in the forts and batteries. Two ships, heavily protected by booms, took up a position in the harbor that allowed them to sweep the outer walls of the town. It was deemed necessary to sink the ships in the arsenal to protect them from bombardment.

The Duke of Savoy and Prince Eugene, at the head of forty thousand men, drove the French from Nice, entered Provence, and laid siege to Toulon. An English fleet of fifty ships, under the command of Admiral Showel, blockaded the port. Fortunately, the enemy, in their march on Toulon, had not been in a hurry, which had allowed us, if not to complete, at least to advance our preparations. When the allies appeared at the end of July 1707, the place could no longer be taken except by a regular siege. Soon Marshal Tessé, coming from Dauphiné by forced marches, entered Toulon, and gave a vigorous impulse to the defensive operations. Admiral Showel, who, in the siege of Toulon, saw only the means of destroying the arsenal, wanted to penetrate the harbor, but the forts at the entrance prevented him from doing so. At his very pressing request, two of these forts, which could not be easily defended, were taken by the enemy. On August 21, six galliots, protected by the English fleet, were able to take up position under the shelter of our batteries and send bombs into the arsenal.[223]

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But all hope of achieving the English admiral's goal soon vanished. The allies, despairing of the success of their enterprise, lifted the siege and withdrew on the night of August 23, having lost about fifteen thousand men to our fire, disease, and desertion. All danger was averted, but the port had, from a maritime point of view, suffered losses that would render it incapable of building up large-scale armaments for a very long time. The enemy fleets were therefore free to act as they pleased in the Mediterranean, as they were already able to do in the Ocean. The English revolted in Sardinia in favor of the Archduke and attacked Minorca in September 1708. An attempt by France to rescue the island was unsuccessful; the English took control of it, and consequently became owners of Mahon, where their fleets could winter.

The navy was abandoned. The officers were not receiving their salaries; the sailors, soldiers, and workers were not paid; those who went to sea, officers, sailors, and soldiers, received only a small portion of what was due to them. The equipment existing in the ports was used, but it was not replaced. The system followed at the end of the previous war was resumed; the State entered into contracts with shipowners and lent vessels on which the officers of the military navy could embark. On October 28, 1706, Captain de Forbin, cruising in the North Sea with four ships, attacked a convoy escorted by six warships. Two of these ships managed to escape, two were sunk and the other two fell into our hands. During this fierce battle, the convoy had been able, by forcing its sails, to put itself out of our reach.[224]

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On May 13, 1707, Forbin, in the English Channel with seven ships carrying forty-eight to sixty cannons, encountered a convoy sailing under the escort of three seventy-gun vessels; one of these ships escaped, but the other two were boarded. Privateers from Dunkirk, accompanying Captain Forbin's division, captured twenty-two merchant vessels. Since the resumption of hostilities, Duguay-Trouin had privateered on ships belonging to him or on vessels loaned by the State. Each year had been marked by successes that had earned him, by the end of 1706, the rank of captain. On September 19, 1707, Duguay-Trouin left Brest with six ships; he was accompanied by Forbin, who had become squadron leader, who had, under his command, a division of eight ships, also armed for the race. On October 21, off Cape Lizard, a large convoy, escorted by five vessels, was sighted downwind. After a stubborn fight, three English vessels, the *Cumberland*, the *Chester*, and the *Ruby*, lowered their flag; the *Royal Oak* managed to escape, and the *Devonshire* blew up. Most of the convoy fell into our hands. The success achieved by Duguay-Trouin and Forbin played an important role in the affairs of Spain. The convoy, attacked and almost destroyed on October 21, was heading for Lisbon with numerous troops and considerable equipment intended for Philip V's rival, Archduke Charles.

Duguay-Trouin recounts in his memoirs, speaking of the combat between one of his ships, the *Lys*, and the English ship the *Cumberland*, an episode which should not be passed over in silence. "I cannot refrain," he writes, "from mentioning the action of one of my foremen, who was the first to jump on board the *Cumberland*, over her broken bowsprit, and who entered her stern ensign, to lower it; he was busy cutting the halyard, when he saw four English soldiers, who had stood flat on the ground, advance on him with raised sabres.[225]

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In this unforeseen peril, he retained enough judgment to throw the English flag into the sea, and then to launch himself into it; he also had the presence of mind to pick up the flag from the water and swim to a boat that the *Cumberland* had in tow; he cut the cable, and, using a sail he found inside, he arrived with the wind behind him and went to this crew aboard the *Achille*, which had remained athwart to leeward, to recover from the disorder in which its collision had left it. The flag I am speaking of here was carried into the church of Notre-Dame de Paris with those of the other English vessels." On November 6 of the same year, Duguay-Trouin, who had put to sea again, sighted an English ship, the *Gloucester*, with sixty cannons; he attacked it and captured it after a battle lasting an hour and a half, in full view of the ships of his division, which were straining to reach him. In 1709, Louis XIV granted him, as well as his brother, letters of nobility.

II

Captain Duclerc had attempted an attack on the capital of Brazil, the city of Rio de Janeiro; this expedition, carried out with insufficient resources, had ended in failure. Captain Duclerc had signed a capitulation under the terms of which he, his officers, and his soldiers were to be sent back to Europe and exchanged.[226]

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Violating their promise, the Portuguese killed Captain Duclerc and some of his men, and threw the others into prisons designed for the worst criminals. Duguay-Trouin, representing a shipping company, asked the Minister of the Navy for permission to renew the enterprise that Captain Duclerc had been unable to complete. This proposal, which was intended to avenge our cowardly murdered soldiers and cause considerable harm to the Portuguese crown, was approved by the king. The State lent ships "careened and in good condition, with their fittings, spare parts, rigging and gear, cannons, weapons, and ammunition necessary for a nine-month campaign." These ships were equipped, in terms of personnel, under the same conditions as if they had been intended for the service of the State. The Company had to pay the pay and provisions for the petty officers and sailors, provisions only for the soldiers, and the table salary as well as the difference between the pay on land and the pay at sea for the officers. A share of the profits, if any, was allocated to the State. The captains and officers of the ships loaned to the Company were taken from the marine corps, and designated by the minister, on the proposal of Duguay-Trouin. However, the latter could present, to exercise a command in his squadron, three privateer captains of recognized value, to whom the State undertook to give a rank in the navy, for the duration of the campaign. The Court of Lisbon, informed of our plans by the English government, hastened to send a ship to Rio de Janeiro, bearing instructions ordering the maritime and military authorities to neglect nothing to ensure the defense of the harbor and the city. The Portuguese governor, having at his disposal, on the one hand, considerable equipment, and, on the other hand, a large number of Blacks, had entrenchments established and batteries erected wherever he supposed we might attack him.[227]

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Duguay-Trouin left La Rochelle on June 9 with the ships *Lys, Magnanime, Achille, Brillant, Glorieux, Fidèle, Mars*, the frigates *Argonaute, Aigle, Amazone, Bellone, Astrée, Concorde*, and the privateers *Chancelier* and *Glorieuse*. Duguay-Trouin was on board the *Lys*, of seventy-four, and the other ships, following the order indicated above, were commanded by Captains de Courserac, de Beaune, de Gouyon, de Lajaille, Lamoinerie, Miniac, de Locite Danycan, Dubois de Lamotte, de Lamare Decan, Du Chesnay Lefez, Kerguelen, de Rogon, de Pradel Daniel, Durocher Danycan and de Laperche. On September 12, at daybreak, the squadron arrived in front of Rio de Janeiro. Duguay-Trouin, not wanting to give the enemy time to reconnoitre, immediately resolved to force the pass. Captain de Courserac, who knew the entrance, received the order to place himself at the head of the squadron, and two vessels were designated to follow him. Duguay-Trouin took the fourth rank, which allowed, as he said, "to see what was happening from head to tail." He ordered the other captains "to march one after the other, according to the rank and strength of their ships." These arrangements were quickly made, and the squadron crossed the pass, vigorously responding to the enemy's fire. "Captain de Courserac," wrote Duguay-Trouin, "has acquired particular glory in this action, by the good maneuver he performed and the pride with which he showed us the way." As soon as the pass was forced, four ships that, until then, had joined their fire with that of the forts at the entrance, cut their cables and ran aground under the city's batteries.[228]

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After the naval action came military action. On the 13th, batteries capable of defeating the city and the forts defending it were established on Goat Island; ships took up positions to support them and protect the landing. The next day, 2,150 soldiers and 600 armed sailors were put ashore. Our troops, after defeating the enemy, entered the city, which they found abandoned; the inhabitants had fled to the mountains, taking their most precious possessions. Three hundred and fifty men, belonging to the Duclerc mission, had broken down the doors of their prison and spread throughout the city, which they were pillaging. After having gathered them together, they were sent, under good escort, to one of the forts we occupied. On the 23rd, the works which defended the entrance fell into our power. The governor, as if seized by real terror, did not dare to attack us, although he had forces several times superior to ours. The commander of the expedition was not only a military leader, but also the representative of a commercial company of which the State was a part. It was necessary to find profits to which the Minister of the Navy, Jérôme de Pontchartrain, was as keen as the shipowners themselves. Now, the richest stores had been pillaged or burned; on the other hand, it was not possible to occupy the city in which we had found very little food; finally, the numerical weakness of the expeditionary force did not allow us to penetrate into the interior. Duguay-Trouin, who bore the weight of a heavy responsibility, sent word to the governor that the city would be destroyed if he did not decide to buy it back by a contribution.[229]

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Negotiations were initiated, then interrupted; bold moves by our troops put an end to the governor's hesitations, who dispatched two men, one military and the other civilian, to Duguay-Trouin to resume negotiations. It was agreed that the city would pay 600,000 crusades and deliver 500 crates of sugar. On November 11, with the contribution paid, Duguay-Trouin completed his final preparations and, on the 13th, he set sail. Two vessels, a prize and one of the expedition's ships, the Concorde, loaded with goods that could only be sold in the southern seas, set sail for this destination.

We had found, in Rio de Janeiro, an officer, four marine guards and three hundred and fifty men, coming from the Duclerc expedition; some soldiers and the other officers had been sent, by the Portuguese, to the Bay of All Saints. Duguay-Trouin intended to free them and to impose a contribution on the city, but, having arrived at the height of the bay, after forty days of a very difficult crossing, he saw himself in the necessity, having only the necessary provisions to go to France, to continue his route. In the vicinity of the Azores, the squadron which, until then, had sailed in good order, received several extremely violent gales, as a result of which it found itself dispersed. Duguay-Trouin anchored in the harbor of Brest on February 6, 1712, with the ships *Lys*, *Brillant* and the frigates *Amazone, Argonaute, Astrée* and *Bellone*; the other ships, inconvenienced by the bad weather, had been forced to look for a port of call. Unfortunately, two ships, one of seventy-four and the other of sixty, *Magnanime* and *Fidèle*, did not reappear.[230]

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The first was commanded by the Chevalier de Courserac, noted by Duguay-Trouin for his fine conduct when the squadron entered the harbor of Rio de Janeiro. The forced entry into this harbor had cost us three hundred men disabled, and the return voyage deprived us of two ships with their crews and the passing troops, or about two thousand men. This expedition, whose military success was remarkable, was very profitable from a commercial point of view; it also harmed the operations of the Allies, by depriving Portugal of the troops it had sent to Brazil and the resources it drew from that country.

The privateer captain Cassard had begun his career in 1686, and until the conclusion of the Treaty of Ryswick, he had never stopped sailing. Having taken part in the Cartagena expedition under the command of Pointis, his conduct had been rewarded with the rank of frigate lieutenant. When the War of the Spanish Succession came, Cassard showed himself to be a worthy emulator of Saint-Pol, Forbin and Duguay-Trouin. Cruising in the Channel and the Atlantic, he captured merchant ships, after boarding the warships that escorted them. Cassard distinguished himself in a particular way in the Mediterranean, escorting grain convoys, impatiently awaited in our country, threatened with famine. Attacked several times in the performance of this duty by superior forces, he saved, thanks to his courage and skill, the merchant ships entrusted to his care, as well as the military forces placed under his command. In 1712, Cassard, then known as a man of proven ability, formed, at Toulon, a privateering armament, comprising three vessels, three frigates and two small vessels, with which he put to sea at the end of March, heading for the Cape Verde archipelago.[231]

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This division seized the forts of La Praya, on the island of San Yago. The Portuguese governor, after giving his word to pay a ransom, having fled into the mountains with the inhabitants, Cassard blew up the forts and took the goods contained in the city's stores. Then heading towards the coasts of America, he successfully attacked and made contributions to Surinam, Essequebo, Berbice, on the coasts of Guyana, Antigua and Montferrat, in the Antilles, Saint Eustatius and Curaçao, in the Gulf of Mexico. His division had become the terror of the English, Portuguese, and Dutch colonies. Cassard returned to France, delivering, on his way, a successful battle against superior forces. This campaign earned him the rank of ship captain.

At that unfortunate time in our history, the navy existed in name only. The only combinations made by the minister, Jérôme de Pontchartrain, consisted of extracting some money from the equipment contained in our arsenals. Ships in need of repair were sold at a low price, even sails and ropes. Not only did the State lend ships for privateering, but also for carrying goods; offices were created, most of them useless, for the sole purpose of selling them. The officers, sailors and soldiers, as well as civil servants, not receiving their pay, were in the most difficult position. Workers able to earn their living by working for private individuals disappeared from the arsenals; Only the incapable remained, living, since they were not paid, in the most terrible poverty. Maritime trade was completely ruined. Long-distance navigation had ceased and the very frequent appearance on our coasts of enemy warships and numerous privateers made coastal shipping, if not impossible, at least very difficult.[232]

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Privateering, which had become one of the forms of commerce, was slowing down every day because it no longer yielded much profit. On land, after alternating successes and setbacks, the fortunes of war had declared themselves in favor of our adversaries, and the danger of invasion of our soil by the allies loomed threateningly before us. Unexpected circumstances came to mitigate, in a favorable way, the crisis we were going through. Joseph I having died on April 17, 1711, without leaving any male descendants, Archduke Charles, the rival of Philip V, was called upon to wear the imperial crown. The system of balance, adopted by the allied Courts, did not allow this prince to unite the entire Spanish monarchy to his States. On the other hand, a change occurred in the internal politics of England, which modified the situation of the belligerents. The Wighs, headed by the Duke of Marlborough, all-powerful since the revolution, were replaced by the Tories.

The new cabinet was composed of men who regarded peace as necessary; we were not, in fact, the only ones to suffer. If, at the end of the war, French shipowners did not dare to build privateering vessels, it had not always been the same. Besides the Saint-Pol, the Forbin, the Duguay-Trouin, the Ducasse, the Cassard, privateers, commanded by brave and skillful captains, had held the sea for a long time. The merchants and shipowners, ruined by the war, continued to complain. England, having undertaken to bribe the coalition, was meeting the greater part of the military expenses. The public debt was increasing, and it was becoming doubtful whether the English would be able to pay the heavy burdens that weighed on them for much longer.[233]

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The English government entered into secret negotiations with the Versailles cabinet, in which the principal conditions of the treaty that these two powers proposed to conclude were established. The British troops abandoned the great army of the coalition in the first days of July 1712. The important victory won a month later by Villars at Denain determined the allies to follow England's example. The Emperor alone remained with arms in hand.

The city of Dunkirk, having become the terror of English commerce, paid dearly for the glory it had acquired; one of the clauses of the treaty concluded with England obliged us to fill its port. France had to cede to this power Hudson Bay and Strait, St. Christopher Island, Acadia, and the island of Newfoundland. We retained the right to build huts for drying fish caught on a certain stretch of the coast. Spain abandoned Gibraltar and the island of Minorca; she had, moreover, to submit to a condition in which the strength of British trade is revealed. England demanded that the exclusive right to carry negroes to the Spanish colonies in America for thirty years be conceded to her; without the acceptance of this clause by Spain, hostilities would not have ceased. Peace was signed between France and the Emperor on March 6, 1714.[234]

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BOOK X

The Regency. - War with Spain. - Death of Cardinal Dubois and the Duke of Orléans. - Cardinal Fleury. - Expedition to India. - Dispatch of a squadron to Tripoli. - A naval division goes to the Baltic. - War between England and Spain. - Systematic abandonment of the navy. - War of the Austrian Succession. - Battle of La Ciotat. - France declares war on England. - Attempt made by Prince Charles Edward to restore the Stuarts. - Capture of Louisbourg. - Expedition of the Duke of Enville. - English attempt on Lorient. - Battles of the squadron leaders - Lajonquière and de l'Etenduère. - Holland joins England.

I

Parliament, after annulling Louis XIV's will, decided that the government would be entrusted to the Duke of Orléans during the young king's minority. The claims of the King of Spain, Philip V, to the crown of France, threatened the new order of things. The Duke of Orleans, seeking support against Spain, resolved to establish close relations with England. George II feared the enterprises of the dispossessed royal family; an attempt at restoration, made by James II, had just been repressed with extreme severity, but the government knew that the Jacobites were only waiting for a favorable opportunity to take up arms again.[235]

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Under these conditions, a rapprochement between France and England became easy. Negotiations, initiated at The Hague, resulted in an alliance between France, England, and Holland against Spain. This treaty guaranteed the order of succession to the crowns of France and England, as established by the signatories of the Treaty of Utrecht. The regent thus confirmed, in the eyes of Europe, Philip V's renunciation of the throne of France. Dubois, the French negotiator, obtained no other advantage for his country. France barred its soil to the Jacobites and, moreover, had to force the pretender, who had established his residence in Avignon, to cross the Alps. Finally, and more seriously, the regent undertook to abandon work on the Mardick Canal, intended, in the mind of Louis XIV, to replace the town of Jean Bart. A French army crossed the Spanish border in March 1719. Our troops burned the ships that were in the yards at the port of Passage; on the other hand, the destruction by the English of the arsenals of Cintera, Santona and Vigo led to the loss of many ships for Spain. Finally, the English defeated, inflicting heavy losses, a squadron that was supporting the operations of the Spanish troops in Sicily. On February 17, 1720, preliminaries of peace were signed between Spain and the powers allied against it; the definitive conclusion of the treaty took place the following year. It is difficult to admit such an oversight of the political rules which should have governed the conduct of the French and Spanish governments. This war seemed to have been waged for the sole benefit of England. Spain, our natural ally, emerged weakened from this struggle. For a long time already, the Dutch had no longer thought of resisting England; as for the French navy, it was disappearing every day.[236]

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England was rapidly advancing towards the conquest of maritime and commercial supremacy.

At the conclusion of the last peace treaty between England and Spain, George I had hinted that Gibraltar would return to its former masters, if he succeeded in reaching an agreement on this point with his parliament. The king may have been in good faith, but he had little knowledge of the people over whose destiny he presided. The English nation had never allowed the famous fortress to be handed over to Spain. The steps taken to this end by the Court of Madrid led to no results, and Philip V was able to convince himself that he should retain no hope in this regard. He learned, moreover, that the English were engaged in continual violence against the Spanish merchant marine in the Caribbean Sea and on the coasts of South America, in both oceans. Our well-known weakness was not unrelated to England's conduct towards a power which it would have been in our interest to support. Although the situation appeared very threatening, the pending difficulties were once again smoothed over. The Spanish troops, which had already laid siege to Gibraltar, withdrew and England recalled the squadrons it had sent to the coasts of South America. The Court of London desired peace, but English commerce, whose greed knew no bounds, wanted war. Cardinal Dubois, who, without having the title of Prime Minister, directed all the affairs of State, died in 1723; a few months later, the Duke of Orleans followed him to the grave. During the minority of Louis XV, the navy had been directed by a Council, composed of three general officers and three intendants, under the presidency of Marshal d'Estrées.[237]

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The Count of Toulouse, in his capacity as Grand Admiral of France, had the right to attend Council meetings. This system ceased to be in force from 1723. On March 17 of that same year, Fleurian, Count of Morville, was appointed Secretary of the Navy Department; a few months later, on August 10, he was replaced by Phélypeaux, Count of Maurepas. Under the Regency, the navy had been abandoned; Cardinal Fleury did not improve this situation, and, during his long ministry, history has few maritime events to record.

In 1725, the East India Company sent a division comprising six ships to the Malabar Coast; Captain de Pardaillan, under whose command this division was placed, seized Mahé. The name of Labourdonnais, which was soon to become famous, figures with distinction in the account of this expedition. Born in Saint-Malo in 1699, Labourdonnais had embarked, at the age of ten, on board a ship which was leaving for the South Seas; a few years later, he made a voyage to the Philippines. Entering, in 1719, the service of the Compagnie des Indes, he was embarked, as second captain, on one of the ships of the division which had operated on the coasts of Malabar. During one of his voyages, a learned Jesuit had taught him mathematics, and a king's engineer, who was going to the Ile-de-France, had given him lessons on fortifications and military tactics; Labourdonnais was provided with the necessary training to provide services on land and at sea. In 1728, a squadron went to Tripoli, whose bey gave us continual grounds for complaint. After a bombardment, which did not lead the Tripolitans to grant us the satisfaction we demanded, the squadron returned to Toulon and was disarmed.[238]

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Stanislas, called to the throne of Poland upon the death of Augustus II, saw his election attacked by Russia and Austria. The success of his rival, Augustus III, threatened Polish independence. France had an interest in supporting Stanislas's cause; on the other hand, the difficulties of this undertaking could not be ignored. It was necessary to send an army to Poland and, in this case, to cross part of the European continent, or to transport this army by sea. In France, the army and the nobility loudly demanded the intervention of the government. Cardinal Fleury, not daring to oppose this current of opinion, declared war on Austria, which was lending its support to Stanislas's rival, and, although he had a firm intention of not interfering in Polish affairs, he sent Captain Dubois de Lamotte with a naval division of fifteen hundred men to Danzig, where the new king had taken refuge. Dubois de Lamotte, learning on his arrival in the Baltic that the city of Danzig was besieged by thirty thousand Russians, led his division to Copenhagen. Our ambassador to Denmark, Count de Plélo, obeying chivalrous sentiments, put himself at the head of the small detachment sent from France and attempted to penetrate the city of Danzig by forcing the Russian lines. He was killed, as were most of the men who accompanied him.

A report addressed to the king in 1730 by the Count of Maurepas tells us that the budget of the Ministry of the Navy did not exceed nine million per year. Now, of this sum, the galleys, long considered useless, took one million six hundred thousand livres.[239]

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One million seven hundred thousand livres was allocated to the various services indicated, as follows, in the minister's report, "salaries of major officers and troops, soldiers' pay and provisions for their subsistence and clothing, fortifications and expenses necessary for them, including the fitting out of vessels that are sent to the colonies every year." Then came expenses relating to pensions and salaries of officers of all ranks, the pay of petty officers and arsenal personnel, hospitals, store rents, etc., etc. This arrived at a figure of six and a half million, without having provided for any other fitting out than that of the rare ships sent to the colonies every year, as stated above. There remained then a sum of a little more than two million, "used," said the minister, "in the construction, maintenance and repair of vessels." Thus we had officers who did not sail; how could we demand from these officers, when war broke out, knowledge that it was not given to them to acquire. The same observation applied to the petty officers and the sailors of the specialties. So much for the personnel. If we move on to the equipment, we see that the number of vessels, frigates, corvettes and brigs did not exceed the figure of fifty-one. Now, at the same time, England had one hundred and sixty-nine warships fit to put to sea and forty under construction or repair, the latter being able to be ready in a very short time.

Continual difficulties arose between the Courts of Madrid and London. English merchants did not want to admit that their government did not remove, even by force, the obstacles that could prevent their goods from entering foreign markets.[240]

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When the Treaty of Utrecht was concluded, the Court of London stipulated that English commerce would have the right, each year, to send to Porto Bello a ship of five hundred tons, carrying goods from Europe. The English first sent a ship whose tonnage exceeded that specified in the treaty, then several ships. Only one anchored at Porto Bello, but this one, as its hold emptied, received, by longboats, the cargo from the other ships that were anchored nearby. Driven by the love of profit and emboldened, on the other hand, by the weakness of the Spanish authorities, English commerce sent ships to the coasts of Mexico and the mainland, which flooded the country with goods. Faced with this formal violation of the treaties, Spain finally became upset; coastguard vessels, charged with monitoring the coastline, captured smugglers' ships. In this struggle, violence was committed on both sides against people. As soon as this illicit trade was hampered, London resounded with complaints from the merchants. England, which had made the Navigation Act, did not want to recognize Spain's right to close its colonies to foreign trade. The British ministry, deeply convinced of the injustice of the claims made against it, tried to calm things down. On the other hand, Spain, animated by the desire to preserve peace, made concessions; the Treaty of Pardo, signed on January 10, 1739, did not put an end to the pending difficulties. English trade did not want to be satisfied with the advantages granted by Spain; he saw benefits that escaped him and no other consideration could touch him. This cause, however bad it was, found defenders in parliament.[241]

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Members of the Upper House and the House of Commons declared that they would cease to sit if the stipulations of the Treaty of Pardo, which regulated commercial relations between the two nations, were maintained. Prime Minister Walpole, who wanted to remain in power, bowed. Although no incident had occurred since the signing of the last peace treaty, the Court of London declared war on Spain. The beginnings were far from favorable to England. The government, to give initial satisfaction to public opinion, had decided that the first operations would be directed against the Spanish colonies in America. Admiral Anson, who was to sail to the western coast of South America, lost almost all of his ships; Admiral Vernon ran aground off Cartagena; Finally, the merchant navy suffered very significant losses. The English blamed the ministry for these failures, which was overthrown. The new cabinet, knowing what was expected of it, requested considerable sums for the various naval services, which Parliament hastened to grant.

The course followed by maritime and commercial England since the conclusion of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 showed the extent of the error that the government of Louis XV had committed in neglecting the navy. It was easy to foresee that the Court of London would not treat us with more consideration than Spain, the day when circumstances allowed it to attack us with advantage. The opportunity awaited on the other side of the strait was not long in presenting itself. Emperor Charles VI, the last prince of the House of Austria, died on 20 October 1740. Europe had guaranteed the Pragmatic Sanction which ensured the rights of Archduchess Maria Theresa, but no sooner had the Emperor descended into the grave than his daughter found herself in the presence of numerous competitors.[242]

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In 1741, one of them, the Elector of Bavaria, supported by Spain and France, attacked Austria. England, satisfied to see us engaged in a continental war, followed events without declaring itself. However, its diplomacy made continual efforts to increase our difficulties in Europe.

Since England had declared war on Spain, our naval budget received an additional three million. New construction and repairs absorbed part of this sum, and the rest was devoted to armaments. England, although at war with Spain, behaved towards neutrals with her usual arrogance; his navy worried our merchant ships, and, under vain pretexts, attacked our warships. A squadron, placed under the command of Lieutenant-General d'Antin, appeared in the Caribbean Sea to protect our commerce while the English operated, with considerable forces, in the Gulf of Mexico, against the Spanish possessions. A detachment of this squadron, comprising three ships and a frigate, under the command of Captain de l'Épinay, had just left Saint-Domingue to go to Martinique when it saw, in front of it, six English vessels. The captain of one of these vessels, after having uselessly ordered Captain de l'Épinay to turn across, sent cannonballs at him. The French ship, having responded with a broadside, the engagement became general; The fighting had been going on for several hours when the English, ceasing fire, moved out of range. At daybreak, a boat brought an officer on board the vessel, which Captain de l'Épinay was boarding, to present him with the apologies of the head of the English division.[243]

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He had believed, the officer said, that he was in the presence of Spanish ships concealing their nationality.

Cardinal Fleury died in 1743. Honest, disinterested, and economical with state funds, the cardinal sacrificed the dignity and security of France to his desire to preserve peace. He neglected the navy, not only because he wanted to avoid the expense, but also to satisfy England's touchy feelings. After the reign of Louis XIV, France, exhausted and impoverished, felt the dual need to recover its strength and rebuild its finances. A peaceful policy was the natural consequence of this situation; but, under the regency as well as under the ministry of Cardinal Fleury, the measure was exceeded, and the excess of prudence led to the decline of the country. Louis XV declared that he would no longer have a principal minister, but, incapable of devoting himself to the work which would have been necessary to give direction to his government, he left each of the secretaries of state to act as master in his department. The Count of Maurepas, when he was no longer subject to the authority of Cardinal Fleury, showed himself more active than he had been until then; but, in 1743, the war was near and the short time which separated us from it would not have allowed, even a skilled minister, to modify appreciably the situation of our navy. During the same year 1743, which saw the death of Cardinal Fleury, two ships and a frigate, under the command of Captain de Caylus, were on their way to enter the Mediterranean when, a short distance from the Strait of Gibraltar, three English vessels were sighted. Around eleven o'clock in the evening, the captain of one of these vessels hailed a French vessel, inviting it to lay low and wait for a boat that was about to come on board.[244]

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The French captain's response having been negative, the English vessel opened fire; shortly after, the three French vessels were attacked. The engagement lasted several hours. At daybreak, an officer, arriving in a boat bearing the parliamentary flag, presented Captain de Caylus with the apologies of the officer commanding the British division; the latter had mistaken our vessels for Spanish ships. Things had not happened differently during the attack on the vessels commanded by Captain de l'Épinay. When the warships of the two nations came together, it was rare for incidents not to occur, in which the rights of neutrals were completely ignored by the British navy. Sometimes, our irritated officers took the initiative and forced the warships of Great Britain to salute the French flag.

II

Twelve Spanish ships, commanded by Squadron Leader Don José Navarro, were anchored in the harbor of Toulon, waiting for several months for a favorable opportunity to sail. Spain had troops in Italy with whom it could only communicate by sea. Don Navarro had received orders to bring them reinforcements and munitions, but an English fleet of thirty ships, under the command of Admiral Mathews, cruising near Toulon, kept a very active watch on the movements of the Spanish squadron.[245]

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Given the inequality between the forces he commanded and the English fleet, Don Navarro did not consider it prudent to put to sea; he was all the less inclined to do so since his ships, both in terms of equipment and personnel, were in the most deplorable state. We had, in the harbor of Toulon, a squadron led by Lieutenant-General Labruyère de Court. Yielding to the insistence of Spain, Louis XV decided that Don Navarro would be escorted by this squadron until his mission was fully accomplished. Lieutenant-General Labruyère de Court and Don Navarro set sail on February 19, 1744, the former having fifteen ships under his command, and the latter twelve. Don Navarro, declining the proposal made by the French admiral to intermix the ships of the two nations, the Spanish squadron formed the rearguard. On the 22nd, the English fleet, twenty-nine ships strong, was sighted to windward; it immediately bore down on our fleet, drawn up in line of battle. The English vanguard took up position abreast of our first squadron, and the center, directly placed under the orders of the commander-in-chief, Admiral Mathews, stopped abeam of our rearguard, that is to say, the Spaniards. The action began around two o'clock. An hour later, Lieutenant-General de Court, seeing that the English fleet was not moving up along our line, and fearing that the Spanish squadron would be attacked by both the enemy's center and rearguard, signaled his vanguard, commanded by Squadron Leader Gabaret, to turn. Whether the light breeze made this maneuver impossible or the signal had not been seen, this order was not executed. On the other hand, the English rearguard, commanded by Vice-Admiral Lestocq, maintained its position, for no apparent reason, although it had no adversaries across its flank.[246]

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After several hours of very heavy fire, the English vanguard, which, as we saw above, was fighting our first squadron, withdrew towards the center of its fleet; under these conditions, the entire English effort could be directed towards the rearguard. Admiral de Court, when he no longer had any enemies abeam, veered and headed, followed by the entire squadron, towards the point where the fighting was taking place; but the breeze was light and he was making only slow progress. The English admiral did not wait for us; he veered, exchanged a vigorous cannonade with the rearguard and moved away, taking a Spanish vessel with him, but this one, having remained behind the English fleet, was chased and recaptured with the crew that the enemy had put on board. The next day, at daybreak, a Spanish vessel which, during the night, had made the mistake of steering on the English fire, was far from our fleet. As soon as it was recognized, enemy ships set out in pursuit, but some French vessels having come to its aid, the hunters withdrew. The English remained in sight all day on the 23rd, without attacking us, although they were to windward, then they went to repair at Mahon. The Spanish squadron, which had suffered serious damage and was no longer able to carry out its mission, set sail for Cartagena, escorted by the French. The sea being clear, the Spanish troops operating in Italy were able to receive relief. In short, on the day of February 22, known as the Battle of Toulon or La Ciotat, we had gained an incontestable advantage. Admiral Mathews had withdrawn before us and had not attacked us the next day, although he could have done so, since his fleet was to windward of ours.[247]

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By going to Mahon, he left Spain free to reestablish its communications with Italy, which the sending of the English fleet to the Mediterranean was intended to prevent.

When the events we have just reported became known in England, public opinion expressed very strong discontent. Commerce, in whose interest this war was being waged, did not intend to have its hopes frustrated; it demanded that Vice-Admiral Mathews be sacrificed to it. The latter, brought before a court martial, was sentenced, despite the services he had rendered to his country, to lose his rank. Several captains suffered the same punishment. Vice-Admiral Lestocq had a better fortune; Accused by Admiral Mathews of not having taken part in the combat, he appeared before a Council of War which pronounced his acquittal. The Council declared that, the line of battle having been signaled, Vice-Admiral Lestocq could not leave his post except on a formal order from the commander-in-chief. This judgment, if it had been taken literally, would have deprived the leaders of the English navy of any spirit of initiative; one must believe that the judges, far from thinking of fixing a point of maritime jurisprudence, were concerned, in rendering this verdict, only with the situation of the two fleet on the day of February 22. Vice-Admiral Lestocq could, in fact, believe that the commander-in-chief was holding him in reserve to fight the French vanguard, if it came to the aid of the Spanish squadron, from which resulted, for him, the necessity of remaining at the post assigned to him. If, in military service, pure and simple obedience constitutes the general rule, there are circumstances, on the contrary, in which the duty of those who exercise command consists of deviating from the orders received; this is, it must be recognized, the difficult part of their role, public opinion demanding, most often, that success correspond to the decision taken.[248]

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Lieutenant-General de Court had signaled his vanguard to turn, but this order, as we have said, had not been executed at the time it had been given, that is, when it would have been most useful; on the other hand, the Spanish were making very loud complaints, saying loudly that they had been abandoned. Don Navarro could not, however, be unaware that the English had only withdrawn from the battlefield at the approach of the French squadron coming, under the leadership of its commander, to assist the rearguard. The government of Louis XV, without conducting a thorough examination of the various incidents of the day of February 22, removed Lieutenant-General de Court from his command and ordered him not to come to Paris. Public opinion did not approve of an act of severity by which the legitimate self-esteem of our navy seemed to be sacrificed to give Spain an undeserved satisfaction. Our squadron had not achieved a resounding success, but it had remained master of the battlefield. Lieutenant-General de Court could have been omitted because of his age; he was then eighty years old, but the government, if it wanted to give him a successor, had to act with more consideration towards him. Let us say immediately that people in Paris were aware of the injustice of which he was the victim. In 1750, Lieutenant-General de Court was made Vice-Admiral and Grand Cross of Saint-Louis. As, for a fairly long time, there had been no promotion in the navy, it was difficult, in 1744, to find, to command our squadrons, leaders who were not very old; it also resulted that the candidates for high ranks were far from being young.[249]

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Captains Desherbiers de l'Étenduère and de Lajonquière, whom we will discuss later, were appointed squadron leaders, the former in 1745 and the latter in 1746. At the time of their promotion, Mr. de l'Étenduère was sixty-three years old, and Mr. de Lajonquière sixty-five.

The Spanish squadron, at the start of the action, was far from its position and irregularly formed. Some ships, led by the *Real Felipe*, fought valiantly; others played little part in the battle. Don José de Navarro, slightly wounded, abandoned command of his squadron. The *Real Felipe* was, for a moment, in great peril. A very well-maneuvered fireship had arrived a short distance from the ship's stern, without the ships firing on it having succeeded in sinking it, when several cannon shots fired from the *Real Felipe* hit it. At that moment, it exploded. Spain, less severe than France and England, wanted to see, in the battle of the 22nd, only the result. Numerous rewards were awarded to Don Navarro's squadron; he, despite the modest role he had played, received the title of marquis and was promoted to lieutenant-general. Spain was able to believe that its navy had won a signal victory. On March 15, 1744, France declared war on England.

We had, in the Channel, under the command of Lieutenant-General de Roquefeuil, a squadron which was to escort ships carrying landing troops. These were called to join the Stuart partisans who were impatiently awaiting their arrival to take up arms.[250]

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We had declared war without being ready; the English, informed of our plans, having gathered considerable forces in the North Sea, it was necessary to abandon this expedition. The pretender could no longer count on the landing of a French army; his eldest son, Prince Charles Edward, resolved to make an attempt with the limited means the government placed at his disposal. Departing from the coast of Brittany in July 1745, on a private ship, he landed in Scotland. The prince was accompanied by an agent of the French government, the president of the Parliament of Aix, and a few officers; he carried money, weapons, and ammunition. The beginnings of the campaign were successful; quickly rallied by his supporters, the prince marched against the royal troops, whom he defeated in several encounters. For a moment, it seemed that the Stuart cause would triumph. With six thousand regular troops and the Scots, Prince Edward would probably have entered London before the landing of the Duke of Cumberland, eagerly awaited by the English government. On the arrival of the Duke, who had come in all haste from Holland, things changed. The Scottish bands, incapable, despite their indomitable courage, of fighting against the old troops of the Duke of Cumberland, were destroyed at the Battle of Culloden. The Prince fled, and it was through a thousand perils that he managed to regain France. With a good navy and activity, this expedition, attempted at the time of the declaration of war, would have had the greatest chance of success. But, in Paris, affairs were conducted with as much negligence as indecision; The government never knew quite what it wanted, and when a plan was formed, we were never ready in time to execute it.[251]

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The inhabitants of New England had their eyes constantly fixed on our North American possessions. In 1745, they formed a corps of volunteers which, with the help of Commodore Warren's division, landed on the shores of Île Royale and captured Louisbourg. This city, due to the shortsightedness of the French government, had not been prepared to put up a long resistance. Île Royale, forming the southern part of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, constituted the advanced defense of Canada coveted by the Anglo-Americans. The advantage gained by our adversaries was therefore of great importance. During 1746, an expedition, intended to retake Louisbourg, was assembled at Brest; It comprised ten vessels, several frigates and eighty ships carrying three thousand five hundred men and equipment. This squadron was placed under the command of the Duke of Enville, lieutenant-general of the galleys. Such a choice is not easily explained. The expedition, which left Brest on June 22, was dispersed upon landing by a violent gale; three vessels and more than half of the transports missed the assigned rendezvous in the event of separation. An epidemic, which broke out upon the arrival of the squadron on the coast of Acadia, raged with such violence that it reduced the crews and troops to helplessness. The commander-in-chief was among the dead. The plan to attack Louisbourg was abandoned; for a time, consideration was given to taking Annapolis, but this enterprise also had to be abandoned. The expedition returned to Brest, burdened with sick people and having exhausted its supplies.

The English, knowing they had nothing to fear from us at sea, sought to make the most profitable use of the considerable forces at their disposal. They resolved to attempt a raid on the city of Lorient, headquarters of the Compagnie des Indes.[252]

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If this enterprise succeeded, they could cause it great harm by destroying its fleet, its arsenal, and the goods locked in its stores. On October 1, 1746, a squadron of sixteen ships, under the command of Admiral Lestock, anchored at Tallu, in Pouldu Bay; it landed seven thousand men. Lieutenant-General Synclair, who was at their head, after driving before him a gathering of coastguards, a sort of militia made up of poorly armed peasants, marched on Lorient. Convinced that the city was incapable of defending itself, he ordered it to surrender, threatening that if the garrison attempted to resist, he would put the inhabitants to the sword. M. de Villeneuve, major of Port-Louis, who was exercising the command provisionally, having replied that he would defend himself to the last extremity, the English cannonaded the town. On the 7th, the besiegers, to whom the artillery of the place had already done a lot of damage, had to repel a sortie; on the other hand, they had a large number of sick. Surprised by the resistance he encountered, and which he did not expect, fearing, on the other hand, of being cut off from his base of operations if the siege continued, Synclair decided to withdraw. The inhabitants of Lorient had, in the means of defense of the town, only very little confidence. Very concerned, on the other hand, about the fate which awaited them if the place was taken by assault, they were thinking of capitulating when it was learned that the enemy had disappeared. General Synclair reached Pouldu Bay unmolested and re-embarked. The British fleet was temporarily compromised, but the weather improved and it was able to set sail. The English had unfortunately ravaged the country and burned a large number of villages.[253]

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On May 10, 1747, Squadron Leader de Lajonquière and Captain de Saint-Georges set sail from the harbor of Île d'Aix; the former was bound for Canada with two ships and a frigate, escorting forty merchant vessels; the latter was bound for India with two ships, a frigate, and five ships of the Compagnie des Indes. A few days later, an English squadron, cruising in the Gulf, was sighted; this squadron, under the command of Admiral Anson, consisted of fourteen vessels. Squadron Leader de Lajonquière signaled the frigates *Emeraude* and *Chimère* to escort the convoy, which was ordered to continue its journey. The winds were blowing from the north, fresh and fresh. As the enemy approached, the two French divisions took the closest tack to starboard, forming a line of battle composed as follows: the *Diamant*, of fifty, the *Invincible*, of seventy-four, the *Sérieux*, of sixty, the *Jason*, of fifty, and the frigate *Gloire*. Two ships of the Compagnie des Indes had followed the convoy; the other three were placed at the rear of the line. It was with such weak forces that squadron leader de Lajonquière was going to fight against fourteen vessels, including one of ninety, one of seventy-two, nine carrying sixty to sixty-six guns, one of fifty and one of forty. The enemy, which had been sighted at seven o'clock in the morning, arrived at about four o'clock in the afternoon within cannon range. The English vessels took up position, some on the starboard side, others on the port side, thus placing our ships between two fires. The ships of the Compagnie des Indes, weak in size and poorly armed, surrendered shortly after the start of the battle; the same was true of the *Jason*, which found itself, from the start of the action, surrounded by superior forces.[254]

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The *Rubis*, Captain Macary, armed en flûte, fought intrepidly, but carrying only twenty-six cannons, it could not put up a long resistance. The *Gloire*, of forty, defended itself with the greatest vigor; it was seven o'clock when this frigate lowered its colors. Its captain, the Chevalier de Saliesse, mortally wounded, had, in Lieutenant de la Marinière, a worthy successor. The *Sérieux*, Captain Daubigny, carrying the flag of Squadron Leader de Lajonquière, the *Diamant*, Captain Hocquart, and the *Invincible*, commanded by Captain de Saint-Georges, head of the division going to India, made a desperate defense. These three vessels were on the point of sinking when they lowered their colors. Lajonquière's squadron leader was seriously wounded.

The assembly, in one of our harbors, of a large number of merchant ships, coming from different ports, required a lot of time. The English, having frigates in observation on our coasts, followed the progress of these operations, being ready to intercept the convoy in formation. Finally, we must add that a convoy thus composed was not in a position to take advantage of a gale to reach the open sea. The task of the English cruisers was therefore easy; we are about to have further proof of this. In the first days of October of that same year, 1747, two hundred and fifty merchant ships, assembled in the harbor of the island of Aix, were ready to leave for the Caribbean Sea. A division, placed under the command of squadron leader Desherbiers de l'Étenduère, was to escort them to their destination; this division consisted of eight ships and the sixty-four ship of the Compagnie des Indes, the Content. On the 6th, the squadron and the convoy set sail. On the 14th, several large vessels were sighted to the south; it was an English squadron, fourteen ships strong, heading towards us.[255]

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The winds were blowing from the fresh east. The order was given to the convoy to head northwest and to the ship, the Content, to accompany it. The squadron leader of the Étenduère, having, as far as was in his power, ensured the safety of his convoy, set abeam and awaited the enemy under small sails. The battle began around eleven thirty, between our eight vessels and the fourteen English vessels; some of the latter passed to leeward of the French line; at four o'clock, the *Neptune*, of seventy, shaved like a pontoon, lowered its colors; it was then commanded by Lieutenant de Kerlerec. Captain de Fromentière, who commanded the *Neptune*, had his thigh blown off by a cannonball, and at the moment he was struck, his second in command, Lieutenant Longueval d'Harancourt, fell mortally wounded. Around five o'clock, after a heroic resistance, the *Fouqueux*, captain Vignau, the *Trident*, captain Amblemont, the *Severn*, captain Rouret, the *Monarque*, captain Labédoyère, were forced to lower their flags. The fighting had been going on for eight hours when the *Terrible*, captain Dugay, surrendered. The *Fougueux*, the *Trident* and the *Terrible* were completely dismasted. Two French vessels, the *Tonnant*, captained by Chaffault, carrying the flag of the squadron leader Étenduère, and the *Intrépide*, captained by Vaudreuil, were still fighting. The *Tonnant*, disabled, was in the middle of the English. The brave captain de Vaudreuil headed towards this vessel to give it a tow. After having executed this maneuver brilliantly, under enemy fire, he moved away from the battlefield fighting. The English vessels, able to sail, followed the *Tonnant* and the *Intrépide*, but the well-directed fire of our two vessels kept them at a distance.[256]

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The well-directed command of our two ships kept them at bay. Captain Saumarez, of the *Nottingham*, lost his life in this final attack. Night, which had fallen, favored the retreat of the two French vessels; they took a wrong turn, and, a few days later, they entered Brest. The squadron leader Étenduère wanted the *Tonnant* to arrive in the harbor, towed by the *Intrépide,* in order to clearly demonstrate what his ship owed to Captain de Vaudreuil. The squadron leader Étenduère had been hit twice by enemy fire, and the captain Chaffault, his flag captain, was wounded.

The late hour at which the battle of October 14 ended did not allow the English to chase the convoy. The next day, having no more enemies in sight, the latter resumed the route which led him to his destination. The squadron leader Étenduère and his captains, although unable to lull themselves with the hope of defeating fourteen vessels with eight, had energetically supported the honor of the flag. The battles of May 10 and October 14, 1747 showed that the military navy did not hesitate to sacrifice itself for the salvation of the ships entrusted to its care. If the officers and crews had done their duty, it is easy to see that the minister had not done his. He wanted to protect trade; nothing was more legitimate, but before making a decision in this regard, it was necessary to know if we had the possibility. The English navy, and the minister could not ignore it, was cruising in force on our coasts to remove these same convoys that we wanted to save. We had seen this clearly a few months earlier, when the squadron leader Jonquière had to fight, in the Bay of Biscay, fourteen ships with four. On October 14 of the same year, we had eight ships, but that was still insufficient to fight against fourteen.[257]

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It was still insufficient to fight against fourteen. In short, in the space of a few months, the ministerial combinations had resulted in delivering ten ships and several frigates to the enemy, without having attempted any military operation; we had also lost seven thousand men, killed, wounded, or prisoners.

This could not be called waging war. Since April 17 of that same year, 1747, France had one more enemy: Holland.[258]

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BOOK XI

Labourdonnais Governor General of the Isles of France and Bourbon. - He has command of a squadron. - His appearance off Pondicherry and Mahé. - Recall of the ships placed under his command. - Labourdonnais forms a new squadron with a few ships from France. - He touches down at Madagascar. - A hurricane disables his ships. - Engagement with an English division. - Labourdonnais takes Madras. - Siege laid off Pondicherry. - Labourdonnais prisoner in England. - He returns to France. - The government has him imprisoned in the Bastille. - He is released. - His death.

I

Labourdonnais, whose name we have already mentioned in connection with the expedition against Mahé, on the Coromandel Coast, during the year 1725, had been appointed Governor General of the Isles of France and Bourbon in 1734. The few inhabitants of these islands, living in disorder and laziness, took no advantage of the resources offered by these magnificent possessions. Several times already the Company had raised the question of abandoning the Isle of France, occupied only since 1720, and which produced nothing. Under the leadership of the new Governor General, things changed. Labourdonnais established order and justice in both colonies; trade and agriculture were encouraged.[259]

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Coffee cultivation made the Isle of Bourbon prosperous, and the Isle of France became a stopping point where food, refreshments, and hospitals were available. By 1738, the Isle of France was able not only to repair but also to careen the Company's ships; small vessels had already been built, and a 500-ton ship was, at that time, in the shipyards. The military aspect had not been neglected; forts and coastal batteries ensured the defense of both islands. Called to Europe on private business, Labourdonnais was in Paris in 1741. Convinced that a break with England and Holland was inevitable, he formed the plan to assemble, at the Isle of France, six vessels, two frigates and some light vessels, with which he intended, as soon as the news of the declaration of war reached him, to privateer in the Indian seas. He estimated that he would be able to ruin the trade of Great Britain, and even to attack its possessions, before the arrival of sufficient forces to fight it. This was a private enterprise, the costs of which were to be borne by Labourdonnais and some of his friends. Labourdonnais, abandoning the post of governor of the Isles of France and Bourbon, would take command of this squadron. To understand the above, one must not lose sight of the fact that the tradition of Jean Bart and Duguay-Trouin was in all its strength; moreover, how could individuals have invested considerable sums in an enterprise which presented so many unfavorable chances, if they had not had the hope, not only of recovering their costs, but also of receiving a certain profit.[260]

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Unable to carry out the plan he and his friends had formed without the government's consent, Labourdonnais submitted a memorandum to the Minister of the Navy, which the latter addressed to Cardinal Fleury. The cardinal summoned Labourdonnais, treated him with great kindness, and told him to go to the Comptroller General, to whom he had given his instructions. The Comptroller General spoke to Labourdonnais as follows: "His Majesty wishes to equip a squadron for India; He will provide two of his ships, the *Mars* and the *Griffon*, and the Company will provide four and two Discoveries. His Majesty has chosen you to command this squadron. You must carry out in India, for the Company, the plan you had formed for your own benefit. Let there be no question here of your discontent. Obey and continue to serve well." The king will take care of you and your fortune." Labourdonnais did not view the success of his proposals with the cardinal and the minister without regret; the result went far beyond what he had wished for. Maintained, by order, in his post as governor of the islands of France and Bourbon, he was prescribed to keep, with regard to the Compagnie des Indes, the most absolute secrecy regarding the plan of campaign which had just been decided; now, this plan of campaign, he was charged with executing it with a squadron in which the majority of the ships of this same Company were to be found. The latter, receiving from the government the invitation to send ships to the island of France, without even wanting to inform it of the service for which they were intended, would accuse it of having acted with the ministers to provoke a decision entailing an increase in expenditure which it would not even admit for the time of war. In fact, the directors of the Company, taking no account of precedents, regarded it as certain that a rupture between France and England would not be followed, beyond the Cape of Good Hope, by any act of hostility.[261]

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The Cross of Saint Louis was the only distinction by which the government had recognized the important services of the governor of the islands of France and Bourbon; the cardinal, as much to reward Labourdonnais as to facilitate the accomplishment of the eventual mission with which he was charged, wanted him to have a rank in the royal navy, and he had him appointed frigate captain. Not only had the State accepted the plan proposed to it, but the Comptroller General had himself determined the means of action. There was reason to believe that things would happen as they had been arranged; we will see what came of it.

Labourdonnais went to Lorient to oversee the armament of the Company's ships, which were part of his squadron, and to take command of the *Mars*, a sixty-gun ship. On 3 April 1741, Labourdonnais put to sea with five of the Company's ships, one of fifty-six, two of fifty, one of twenty-eight and another of sixteen. Already a first attack, and a serious one, had been made on the plan agreed upon in Paris; during his stay in Lorient, Labourdonnais had been informed that he would not have the two ships of the State Navy, the *Mars* and the *Griffon*, which had been promised to him. The Company, dissatisfied with the decision taken by the government, a decision whose purpose it did not know, had not bothered to put capable personnel on the ships armed at Lorient. Among the men embarked as sailors, there were a large number who had never been to sea; As for those who appeared on the rolls as soldiers or artillerymen, most of them did not have, to any degree, the education required for their job.[262]

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As soon as he was at sea, Labourdonnais worked tirelessly to train the crews; after spending twenty days at Rio Grande du Sul, on the coast of Brazil, he arrived at the Isle of France on August 14. Learning that the garrisons of the Isles of France and Bourbon had been sent to Pondicherry, which was threatened by the Maratts, he set sail on August 22 and appeared before the city on September 30. All difficulties had been resolved and Pondicherry was no longer in any danger; the same was not true of the trading post at Mahé, which had been blockaded for eighteen months by the natives. Labourdonnais set sail on October 22; Having arrived in front of Mahé, he put himself at the head of a part of his crews and defeated the enemy. The affair was not without importance, since there were, on our side, fifty-six killed and one hundred and twenty wounded, and on our adversaries, more than five hundred men out of action. Having succeeded, in February 1742, in concluding a peace treaty with the people of the country, he brought his ships back to the Isle of France. These, repaired with the greatest care and provided with everything they needed, were ready to sail. Labourdonnais, awaiting, every day, the news of a rupture between France and England, wanted to be able to execute, without losing a moment, the plan of campaign of which he was the author. Such was the situation when a ship, which had left France in November 1741, brought letters from the Company ordering the ships of the squadron to be sent back to Europe; it was said, so much did it seem to be feared in Paris that some pretext was being imagined on the Isle of France to keep them, that these ships would be sent in ballast, if the colony had no cargo to give them. Labourdonnais saw the departure, with deep sorrow, of this squadron, the object of all his care, with which he believed himself assured of striking the English a decisive blow by hitting them in what affects them most, their trade.[263]

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The instructions for the squadron's dismissal had left France in November 1741. On March 22, 1742, that is, a few months later, the Comptroller General, in a new letter, expressed the hope that his orders had not been carried out. Thus, at the end of 1741, the course of action to be followed beyond the Cape of Good Hope, in the event of war with England, was decided. A few months passed, and already the adopted conditions underwent a significant modification; the government kept the two vessels it had undertaken to join the squadron armed at Lorient. This squadron left in April and, in November, the formal order to send it back to Europe was sent to the Isle of France by the Comptroller General, whom the Company had managed to circumvent. Through a sort of blindness, difficult to explain, the Company did not want to admit that, with the outbreak of war, no act of hostility would be committed in the Indian Ocean. Finally, in a dispatch, written shortly after the letter ordering the return to Europe of the ships assembled at the Isle of France, the Comptroller General expressed the hope that Labourdonnais had not carried out his orders. How, with affairs conducted in this way, is it possible to wage war successfully?

After the departure of his squadron, Labourdonnais, seeing that the day war broke out he would be unable to act, had only one thought: to return to Europe. Consequently, he wrote to Paris to ask to be replaced in his functions as governor of the islands of France and Bourbon. On March 7, 1744, that is to say, eight days before France declared war on England, the Comptroller General replied that there could be no question, in the present circumstances, of his returning to France.[264]

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I consider you, said the Comptroller General at the end of this dispatch, "as a man not only useful, but even necessary." On September 11, a frigate brought dispatches announcing that war had broken out between France and England. Labourdonnais received, at the same time, orders to behave towards the English as if peace continued to subsist; he was only permitted to attack them if they were the first to commit some act of hostility.

It is difficult to imagine on what reasoning the Company based the instructions it sent to India. During his stay in France, Labourdonnais had endeavored to show that a convention of neutrality, concluded between the two Companies, could have no other result than to safeguard English trade; no account had been taken of his observations. The Governor-General of our possessions in India, Dupleix, acting in accordance with instructions from Paris, entered into negotiations with the Governor of Madras which resulted in the signing of a treaty of neutrality on land and at sea. The English had hastened to accept our proposals, but they had declined any commitment with regard to the warships of His Britannic Majesty, either in India or capable of being sent there. This was the difficulty that Labourdonnais had pointed out to the Minister and the directors of the Company. It was evident that a particular treaty, concluded between the two Companies, without the participation of the governments of France and England, was, in advance, null and void; the proof was not long in coming. A few months after the rupture between the Courts of London and Paris, several warships left England to go to India.[265]

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As soon as they arrived, they began pursuing the ships of the French Company. The English did not lose a single merchant ship, and almost all of ours were captured; the opposite would have happened if the plan proposed by Labourdonnais and accepted by the government had been executed. Labourdonnais, setting sail upon the arrival of a fine sailing vessel shipped from France on March 15, the date of the declaration of war, was assured of making numerous captures. The warships that left England several months after the break-up were four in number; not only would these ships have arrived too late to prevent our squadron from carrying out what had been decided in Paris, but, inferior in strength to that same squadron, they too would have run the risk of being captured. The Company's directors were quick to understand, from the news from India, that they had committed a serious error in recalling the squadron that had left Lorient at the beginning of 1741. By a letter dated 29 January 1745, they informed Labourdonnais that five ships were leaving for the Isle of France. Labourdonnais was, by virtue of a royal decision, called to the command of these ships; he was to first, and this was particularly recommended to him, take money to Pondicherry, then conduct the expedition to India. I give Mr. Dupleix, said the minister, "the most precise orders to assist you in everything that may depend on him." After having carried out the part of his instructions indicated above, Labourdonnais was to bring his ships back to the Isle of France, load them with goods belonging to the Company and send them back to Europe.

Dupleix, Governor-General of the French possessions in Hindustan, was convinced that the English government would not respect the neutrality convention concluded with the authorities of Madras.[266]

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Although he had received formal orders from the Company not to incur any expense to fortify Pondicherry, he had carried out, at his own expense, the work deemed necessary to ensure that the capital of our possessions in the Peninsula was in a state to withstand a siege. His predictions had not deceived him. As soon as the English warships arrived, hostilities began and Pondicherry was laid siege. Through his skill, knowledge of the country, and the prestige attached to his person, Dupleix won the nabob of the Carnatic over to our cause; the latter declared that he would march on Madras if the English did not withdraw. Our adversaries, whose situation was completely changed by the nabob's intervention, took the road back to Madras. Dupleix wrote to Labourdonnais expressing the hope that the latter "would be able to arm some ships of force, to come and support the nation's trade in these seas, which is, in truth, running great risks there, for lack of help." Labourdonnais wanted nothing more than to come to the aid of Pondicherry and French trade, but how to achieve this. He armed for war some of the Company's ships taken from among those best suited to this service, but that was not enough. He had been told, it is true, that five ships would arrive at the end of August, but the year had passed and not one of them had appeared.

It was only in February 1746 that these five ships were reunited at the Isle of France. For two years since war had been declared, these ships were the first that the Company had sent to India for the protection of its possessions and its trade, and even these vessels, having left Lorient with a cargo, had to be armed for war on the Isle of France.[267]

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Labourdonnais worked diligently to effect this transformation; when one of these ships was ready to sail, it was sent to Madagascar, where its crew was fed with provisions purchased locally, thus preserving the colony's supplies.

Labourdonnais left the Isle of France on March 24, heading for Bourbon, which he left on the 29th; from there, he headed for Foulepointe, where he arrived on April 24. A few days later, driven by bad weather, he put out to sea with several ships that were at anchor. For forty-eight hours, the wind blew a gale. Two ships were thrown ashore; the others, disabled and partly dismasted, struggled back to land. Labourdonnais, whose ship had been on the point of sinking, reached the island of Mayotte, where he called all the ships that were on the coast. The squadron leader found himself in an extremely difficult position. Some of the ships that he had, at the cost of the greatest efforts, put in a condition to leave the island of France, could no longer continue the campaign. Everything was missing, and yet it was necessary to find masts, yards, sails and ropes; finally, to carry out work that would have required the personnel of an arsenal, there were only weak, tired crews, insufficient both in number and quality. To complete the numbers, it had been necessary to embark a certain number of Blacks on each ship. With prodigies of skill and energy, Labourdonnais provided for everything. He established sail-making and rope-making workshops; the squadron's carpenters cut pieces of wood in the forests on the mainland, which were brought to the coast by paths cut through the marshes, with wood, branches and reeds.[268]

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The hot and unhealthy climate further complicated the already considerable difficulties of this new armament. On June 1, the squadron set sail; it was composed of the following vessels: the *Achille*, seventy-strong, Labourdonnais on board; the *Phénix*, thirty-eight-strong; the *Bourbon*, thirty-six-strong; the *Neptune*, the *Saint-Louis*, the *Insulaire*, the *Lys*, the *Duc d'Orléans*, and the *Renommée*, thirty-strong. These vessels, built to carry goods and not to wage war, with mediocre personnel and very weak artillery, did not represent a significant military force. With the exception of the *Achille*, none of these ships were underway; finally, owing to the time that had elapsed since leaving the Isle of France, the squadron was putting to sea with few provisions. On July 6, within sight of the Coromandel coast, the English division, placed under the command of Commodore Peyton, was sighted; it consisted of six vessels: the *Medway*, of sixty-four, on which the commodore had his guidon; the *Preston*, of fifty-four, the *Hawich* and the *Winchester*, of fifty, the *Favori*, of forty, and the *Lively*, of twenty-four. All these vessels, with the exception of the *Favori*, were vessels of the Royal Navy; the *Favori*, armed for war by the English, was a vessel of the East India Company, which had been captured at Achem. Finally, of Commodore Peyton's six ships, four had artillery of a caliber that existed, in Labourdonnais's squadron, on only one ship, the *Achille*. Around four o'clock in the afternoon, the Commodore, who was to windward, having let our ships bear on, formed in line of battle, the action began; at seven o'clock, the English held the wind. The next day, at daybreak, the two adversaries were in the same position as the day before.[269]

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Commodore Peyton, free to attack, maintained his position all day out of cannon range. Since the English were in sight, we had easily realized that their ships had a great superiority in speed over ours; it was therefore difficult to reach them if they did not want to. Although very much desiring to have a new engagement with the enemy, Labourdonnais could not lose sight of his instructions; and, according to these, the delivery, at Pondicherry, of the funds embarked on his squadron constituted the most important part of his mission. Finally, he feared falling to the lee of Pondicherry, which would have put him in an even more difficult position since most of his ships were running out of supplies. These various considerations determined him to continue his journey and, on July 9, he arrived at his destination.

The instructions addressed to Labourdonnais included three main points, namely: to unload the Company's funds at Pondicherry, to raid enemy trade, to return to the Isle of France, and then to send the ships of his squadron loaded with merchandise to Europe. Of these three obligations, the first was fulfilled, but the second could no longer be fulfilled, the favorable season for raiding enemy trade had passed; this was the consequence of the delay caused by the Company in sending the ships intended to form the Indian esadra [escadre/squadron?]. It therefore remained to fulfill the third part of the mission; was it necessary to execute it immediately, that is to say to take the road to the Isle of France. It was difficult to admit that such a considerable armament should return to Europe, having done nothing, if not to bring money to Pondicherry.[270]

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Labourdonnais returned to a plan he had formed in 1741, when war was believed to be about to break out; it was to attack Madras. Labourdonnais examined this plan with Dupleix, whose assistance was essential, and both recognized that nothing could be attempted as long as Commodore Peyton's forces remained intact. We therefore had to seek out the English squadron, defeat it, or, if this could not be achieved, cause it serious enough damage to force it to leave the Coromandel Coast. Due to our inferior speed, our ships had little chance of approaching the enemy close enough to board them; it was therefore necessary to rely on cannon alone to defeat the English. Now, the battle of July 6, although it had been favorable to us, had shown the inadequacy of our artillery. Finally, one of our ships, which was taking on a lot of water, had left for one of our trading posts in Bengal, where it had to be repaired. Forty-four eighteen-pounders and fourteen twelve-pounders, borrowed from the arsenal of Pondicherry, were distributed among the various ships of the squadron. This operation had hardly been completed when we learned of the presence, on the coast, of several English warships. Labourdonnais set sail immediately; a few days later, seeing the enemy near Negapatam, he covered himself with sails to join him, but he could not succeed. The next day, the English were reported, to windward, at a great distance; the day after, they were no longer seen. The superiority of their march protected them from any pursuit. It was, moreover, difficult for Labourdonnais to move away from the Coromandel coast; his crews had been reinforced by troops belonging to the garrison of Pondicherry, and he had, on his ships, some of the cannons necessary for the defense of the city.[271]

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Labourdonnais sailed for Pondicherry, where he anchored on August 25.

II

We had intended to destroy England's naval forces, and then, once this had been achieved, to take advantage of the resulting momentary superiority to attack Madras. Since the purpose of the sortie had not been achieved, we found ourselves in the same situation as the day the squadron left Pondicherry to search for the English; now, at that moment, it was recognized that an attack on Madras was not possible. Should we then return to the Isle of France, that is to say, carry out the third part of the instructions, or should we, to give a purpose to the armament, lay siege to Madras, with all the risks that this operation entailed? Labourdonnais hesitated over which course to take. Knowing that the enemy was expecting reinforcements every day, he feared that his squadron, surprised by superior forces, would be destroyed, while, having gone ashore with part of his crews, he would direct the siege of Madras. In this hypothesis, what a serious responsibility he would incur towards the State and the Company; finally, the ships, of which he had command, could alone ensure his return to his government with the troops he had borrowed from the garrisons of the Isles of France and Bourbon.[272]

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Labourdonnais believed it wise to seek the advice of the High Council; the responsibility he bore should, in his mind, be shared by those particularly interested in the attack on Madras. He wrote to the Governor General to this effect. The High Council, in its reply, declined all responsibility for the squadron's operations. Twenty-four hours later, this same Council instructed two of its members to summon Labourdonnais to attack the fort. The High Council of Pondicherry attached the greatest importance to the capture of Madras, but refused to officially declare it. Labourdonnais, unable to find the moral support that would have facilitated his task, decided to attack Madras, assuming sole responsibility for this decision. The negotiations and exchanges of letters between Labourdonnais and the authorities of Pondicherry led to a loss of time which, as we shall see later, had the most serious consequences.

The squadron, after embarking a reinforcement of troops belonging to the garrison of Pondicherry, came to anchor off Madras. On September 15, Labourdonnais disembarked with eleven hundred Europeans, four hundred sepoys, and four hundred Africans; fearing the arrival of an English squadron, he pushed the siege with great vigor. On September 21, Madras surrendered. With the city taken, its fate had to be decided immediately. Three options were open: to make Madras a French colony, to raze the place, or to return it to the inhabitants, imposing a ransom on them. Labourdonnais, convinced that the surrender of Madras to the English would be one of the articles of the treaty when the time came to conclude peace, adopted the latter solution. Keeping Madras, he wrote to Dupleix, "is a chimera that one should not think about."[273]

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A few letters were exchanged on this subject between Dupleix and Labourdonnais, the latter maintaining his opinion, while the former demanded that Madras become a French possession. The Carnatic nabob, as we have seen above, had, at the beginning of the war, lifted the siege of Pondicherry; he had also just resisted the requests of the authorities in Madras who asked him to oppose the march of our troops on that city. The nabob had thus shown himself, in these two circumstances, to be a faithful friend of France, or rather of the governor-general of our possessions in India. Nevertheless, he understood very well that two nations like France and Great Britain, disputing the preponderance on the Coromandel coast, it was impolitic to favor one of them at the expense of the other; their rivalry constituting, for his interests, the best safeguard, he did not conceal that he would see with displeasure Madras become a French possession. If England were weakened, he desired that it should be to her advantage. Invoking the services he had rendered us, he asked that the city of Madras, in the event that it fell into our hands, be handed over to him. Now, Dupleix had the very definite intention of keeping it. Did he believe he could induce Labourdonnais to deliver it to him, or did he think that, in the opposite case, he would be able to direct events according to his desires; In any case, immediately after receiving the news of the capture of Madras, he informed the nabob that the city would be handed over to him. By doing so, he gained time; if, after negotiating with the nabob, it was impossible to avoid the obligation to hand over the place to him, he intended to give it to him only in dismantled form. Such was the situation when Dupleix learned that Labourdonnais had signed, on September 27, an agreement by virtue of which the English, by paying a ransom of a fixed amount, would remain in possession of Madras.[274]

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The Governor General of our possessions in India found himself facing difficulties that, moreover, he must have foreseen; surrendering Madras to the English would have meant breaking the promise he had just made to the nabob. Supported by the High Council of Pondicherry, he refused to allow Labourdonnais to dispose of his conquest without his participation. Consequently, he officially informed them that he considered the agreement made with the inhabitants of Madras for the repurchase of the city null and void. The conflict worsened; Labourdonnais, threatened with arrest by order of Dupleix, imprisoned the High Council's agents sent on a mission to him. We were losing precious time. The month of October, the time when storms begin on the Coromandel Coast, had arrived. On the night of the 13th to the 14th, after a very fine day, a hurricane broke out. Eight ships put to sea; four disappeared. Of the other four, two were unseaworthy; 1200 men had perished. Fortunately, three of the Company's ships, the *Centaure*, of seventy-four, the *Mars*, of fifty-six, and the *Brillant*, of fifty, coming from France, were arriving at Pondicherry at that moment.

After making futile efforts to bring Dupleix to his side, Labourdonnais, forced to leave, addressed the capitulation, as he had accepted it, to the Governor General. On October 23, Labourdonnais, in the presence of the troops under arms, was having one of the Council's envoys, the superior of Pondicherry, recognized as commander of the Madras settlement, when the wind rose and increased rapidly in strength. The ships anchored in the harbor, fearing another storm, set sail. Labourdonnais allowed all the formalities that were to accompany the surrender to be completed.[275]

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Labourdonnais allowed all the formalities that accompanied the handover of command to be completed, then, throwing himself into a rowboat, he managed, at the risk of his life, to rejoin his ships. After remaining two days in Pondicherry, he put to sea, taking all the ships that were in the harbor; those that were in good condition went to Achem, to remain at Dupleix's disposal. Labourdonnais, taking the damaged ships with him, set sail for the Isle of France, which he reached with great difficulty. The city of Madras, which had fallen into our hands on September 21, had been handed over on October 23 to Dupleix, who intended to make it a French possession. The nawab, impatiently awaiting the fulfillment of the commitment made to him, accused the Pondicherry authorities of bad faith. In a moment of irritation, he ordered his troops to attack us. The nawab's army was defeated; this event changed the situation. The nawab, for whom surrendering Madras was no longer an option, sided with the English.

Dupleix, who had intended to capture Fort Saint-David, located about twelve miles south of Pondicherry, had to abandon this plan. Dupleix, a daring genius and a profound politician, dreamed of the Indian empire for France. Entirely absorbed in his work, he had no other thought than the extension of French power and the ruin of our adversaries. He forgot that the government of Louis XV would not follow him down this path. Colonial expansion has no chance of success unless it goes hand in hand with the development of naval forces; now, we had no navy, and we were doing nothing to acquire one that would allow us, if not to fight the English, at least to play an honourable role at sea. Labourdonnais, a famous sailor, trained in military art, capable of leading troops, a first-rate administrator, enjoyed the highest reputation in the Indian Ocean.[276]

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Convinced that Madras would not remain ours, he had negotiated the repurchase of the city, believing that there was no other way to profit from its conquest. It seems that it would have been wise for Dupleix to accept the capitulation, without taking responsibility, if he did not approve of it, and to come to an agreement with Labourdonnais to carry it out under conditions that best served the interests of the State and the Company. If, upon the arrival of the squadron in July, Dupleix and Labourdonnais had agreed on the operations that the army and navy, acting together, could undertake, our affairs would have taken a better turn. The siege of Madras, if it were decided to be undertaken, would have taken place sooner; we thus avoided the loss of twelve hundred men and four ships. By surrendering the city to the English, we removed any pretext for the nabob to intervene. Dupleix had the support of the fleet to take Fort Saint-David and Gondelour. Finally, Labourdonnais, then master of the sea, could go to Hooyly, where the English situation was, at that moment, very compromised.

Labourdonnais learned, upon arriving at the Isle of France, that he had been replaced as governor-general; however, he retained command of the Company's ships. He put to sea, in this capacity, and went to Martinique with several ships carrying merchandise. The instructions from Paris said that the Company's ships were to wait in this colony for the arrival of warships, under whose escort they were ordered to return to Europe. Labourdonnais, whose presence no longer had the same character of necessity, obtained from the governor the authorization to return to France, taking advantage of the first favorable opportunity; he went to the island of Saint-Eustache where he embarked on a Dutch ship.[277]

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This ship, having suffered serious damage at sea, put into an English port. Recognized, Labourdonnais was arrested and considered a prisoner of war. Learning that his conduct in India was under severe attack, he requested permission from the English government, which was granted, to come to France. As soon as he arrived in Paris, he placed himself at the disposal of the Comptroller General of Finance and the Company.

During the course of this war, France, unfortunate at sea, achieved resounding successes with its armies. In 1744, we drove the Austrians out of Alsace and took Freiburg. Marshal Saxe, after capturing Menin, Ypres and Furne, defeated the allied army, composed of Austrians, Dutch and English, at Fontenoy on 11 May 1745; in 1746, we won the Battle of Rocoux and, the following year, we achieved a brilliant victory at Lawfeld, followed by the no less memorable capture of Berg op Zoom by Count Lowendahl. On 7 May 1748, Maastricht fell into our hands. United with the Spanish, we had made rapid conquests in Italy during the years 1745 and 1746. Philip VI having recalled his troops, ours were obliged to return to Provence, but, shortly after, we recaptured Nice, Villefranche, Ventimiglia, and the Austrians were driven out of Genoa. Finances, at the beginning of the war, were in the greatest disorder; the evil had only increased and our resources, in 1747, were almost completely exhausted. The comptroller general, who made incessant complaints about the difficulties of his situation, no longer knew where to find money.[278]

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The war was taking a very large number of men from us, and the intendants reported the impossibility of raising soldiers; industry and agriculture were lacking manpower. In a large part of France, and especially in the south, famine was threatened. The English were blockading our ports; our destroyed navy could neither protect our trade nor rescue our colonies, which were now exposed to falling into the hands of the enemy. Peace was becoming necessary; it was equally desired by the nations engaged in the war, with the exception of England. This power, which ran no other risk than losing its money, knew very well that the ruin of our trade would compensate, for it, and beyond, for the expenses that the continuation of the war might require. Nevertheless, seeing the dispositions of its allies and fearing, on the other hand, the dangers that the war, if prolonged, would pose to the Republic of the United Provinces, it decided to negotiate. The plenipotentiaries signed, on April 30, 1748, the preliminary peace treaties between France and England. The definitive peace treaty between France, England, the Emperor and Empress-Queen, Spain, Sardinia, the United Provinces, the Duke of Modena and the Republic of Genoa was concluded on October 18, 1748, at Aix-la-Chapelle.

On August 30, 1748, a squadron, commanded by Admiral Boscawen, appeared before Pondicherry; it landed troops who laid siege to the city. Forty days passed without the English making any progress; moreover, the bad season was approaching. Admiral Boscawen re-embarked the troops and left. At the time when these last events were taking place, hostilities, as stated above, had ceased between France and England, Dupleix could see that Labourdonnais had not been mistaken; one of the clauses of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle obliged us to hand over the city of Madras to the English.[279]

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France had waged war to carve up Maria Theresa's inheritance, and one of the treaty's clauses obliged her to guarantee the pragmatics of Charles VI. Both sides surrendered their conquests, both in Europe and in the East and West Indies, and in America. The humiliating clause of the Treaty of Utrecht, prescribing the demolition of the port of Dunkirk, was maintained; however, we were permitted to retain the fortifications built on the landward side. The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle renewed the guarantee of the British succession in favor of the House of Hanover. We abandoned Prince Edward, son of the Pretender, whom we had thrown into adventures; the King undertook to expel him from his States. Peace was necessary, but the Cabinet of Versailles was too hasty in concluding it. The capture of Maastricht, which occurred on May 7, 1748, could have led to the loss of Holland, and England had made important concessions to save its ally. Marshal of Saxony ended, in these terms, a letter in which he appreciated the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. "France," said the Marshal, "by surrendering her conquests, has made war on herself. Her enemies have retained their same degree of power; she alone has weakened." She has a million fewer subjects, and has almost no finances left."

The naval fleet, as it was called at the time, had gained such ascendancy over the galley fleet that the latter barely existed anymore except in name. The galley fleet was not only useless, which had long been recognized, but also very expensive, an important issue at a time when we were facing the most serious financial difficulties.[280]

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An edict, issued in 1748, declared its abolition; the personnel transferred to naval service.

The Indian campaign, glorious for our forces, had not, from a financial point of view, produced favorable results for the Company; the latter did not forget this, and the conduct of the victor of Madras was, on its part, the subject of impassioned accusations. The Indian squadron, having carried out a war operation that had brought no profit, its commander had to atone for a fault that, in the eyes of the directors, nothing could excuse. This is how things are done in England, where commerce shows itself to be merciless towards sailors and soldiers when, despite their efforts, they fail to safeguard its interests. On this side of the Channel, public opinion would have revolted at the thought that the Compagnie des Indes could exert a decisive influence on the fate of a man who had honoured the French name. This Company would therefore have pursued Labourdonnais in vain if it had not found an accomplice in the government. It was no secret to anyone, after four years of war, that the ministry had shown extreme incapacity in the conduct of affairs in India. By declaring aloud that Labourdonnais was guilty, the ministers were placing on him the weight of the faults they had committed. The ministers and directors therefore agreed to strike him, the former wanting, by treating the military leader severely, to deceive the public about their own actions, and the latter to satisfy their hatred against the man who, as a result of circumstances beyond his control, had not enriched them.[281]

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The prosperity of the Isles of France and Bourbon, which was the work of Labourdonnais, the campaign plan in India that he had presented and whose failure to execute it would have led to the condemnation of the Ministry in a well-governed country, the arming of his squadron at the Isle of France, the prodigious effort he had made in Madagascar, the advantage gained over Commodore Peyton, the capture of Madras—all were forgotten, and the Ministry had the sad courage to send to the Bastille the man who had rendered such services to his country. After two years of solitary confinement, it was recognized that no reproach could be made against him, and he was released. Undermined by grief, his health weakened by this long detention, so little in keeping with the active life he had always led, he died in 1753, pouring out bitter complaints against Dupleix until his last moments, and perhaps preparing public opinion to welcome the accusations which, a few years later, were to be brought against the Governor General of our possessions in India. Such was the end of Labourdonnais who, under a Colbert, would have died surrounded by honours, after having rendered to the State the services which his triple quality of sailor, soldier and administrator entailed.[282]

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BOOK XII

The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle contains the seeds of a new war between France and England. - Unfair conduct of the Court of London. - Capture, in the midst of peace, of the ships *Alcide*, *Lys*, and *Espérance*, and three hundred merchant vessels. - Preparations made by England for war with France. - Lack of foresight on the part of our government. - Admiral Byng, after an engagement with Admiral La Galissonnière's squadron, withdraws to Gibraltar. - Brought before a court-martial, he is condemned to death and executed. - Setbacks suffered by the English in North America.

I

While the War of the Austrian Succession had caused us much harm, it had brought England no real, undeniable advantage, since it had resulted in no increase in territory for that power. The losses suffered by the shipowners whose vessels had been captured, and the considerable expenses incurred by several years of war, remained uncompensated. The English, whose commercial spirit is evident in all things, consider war as an operation which, if well conducted, must yield profits. It therefore seemed unacceptable to this calculating people that England had derived no advantage from the successes it had achieved at sea. Faced with the nullity of the results, public opinion accused the ministers of incapacity, even of treason.[283]

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Peace had barely been concluded when unequivocal signs of profound discontent were manifested. The members of the opposition, exploiting this situation, declared that the interests and honor of England had been sacrificed at Aix-la-Chapelle. The ministers objected in vain that they had had to negotiate to save an ally that was not only faithful, but also useful, Holland; if the plenipotentiaries, they added, had been less eager to sign the peace treaty, England and her ally would not have obtained such good terms. This reasoning remained ineffective; no one wanted to worry about the victories won by our armies, nor about the dangers to which the war, if prolonged, would have exposed the Republic of the United Provinces. Great Britain, having acquired maritime supremacy, had, in the eyes of the public, incontestable rights to an increase in its colonial power; disappointed in their hopes, the English protested against the conduct of the government with the acerbity that trading nations bring to the discussion of their interests.

The French government, in its haste to sign the peace treaty, had made the mistake of not fixing the boundaries of Acadia and Canada; this delimitation, made on a map at Aix-la-Chapelle, could have presented difficulties, but the plenipotentiaries would have managed to resolve them by taking, as the basis of their work, a river, a stream, mountains, that is to say very clear lines of demarcation, lending little, on the ground, to different interpretations. These natural divisions are, moreover, frequent in North America. As, at that time, all the powers desired peace, an agreement would have been quickly established between the French and English negotiators.[284]

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The Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle entrusted the solution of all questions relating to the delimitation of our possessions in North America to commissioners. A far-sighted government would have understood that this was a source of insurmountable difficulties, if it did not encounter, on the part of the English, a goodwill equal to its own. Now, we knew from experience that, in the settlement of colonial questions, we should not count on the conciliatory dispositions of the Court of London.

Article V of the Peace Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle had decided, with regard to the colonies, that the conquests would be returned to both sides, "so that, it was said, all things would be restored to the state in which they were or should have been before the war." This expression "or should have been" could not fail, by its ambiguity, to become a cause of very lively discussions, the French and the English being absolutely divided on the question of the boundaries of Acadia and Canada. The English, taking advantage of the lack of precision with which this article was drafted, established themselves on territories which belonged to us. In June 1749, the Courts of Paris and London appointed commissioners to whom was entrusted the mission of fixing the boundaries of Acadia. It was decided, at the same time, that, until the definitive settlement of the question, no change would be made to the existing state of affairs. The Anglo-Americans, ignoring this prohibition, continued to advance within the limits which had always been considered the frontiers of our possessions.

In May 1754, M. de Contre-Cœur, commanding a post on the banks of the Ohio, learned that troops, having orders to attack him, were close by.[285]

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He sent an officer, M. de Jumonville, carrying a letter requesting explanations from the leader of the English detachment about the objective he was pursuing. M. de Jumonville, who was accompanied by thirty men, found himself the next morning in the presence of the troops whose march had been signaled. The English, although they had nothing to fear from the French detachment, whose numerical inferiority was evident, fired a volley that killed several men. M. de Jumonville signaled that he was carrying a letter, and the firing ceased; the letter had not yet been read before the English shot the French officer, killed him [or killed by a tomahawk blow by the Iroquois chief Tanaghrisson under a flag of truce], and took his escort prisoner. A soldier, who managed to escape, informed Mr. Duquesne, Governor General of Canada, of the assassination of Mr. de Jumonville and the fate of the soldiers who accompanied him. A request for satisfaction, made immediately by the Governor General, having remained unanswered, our troops seized the fort to which the soldiers of Mr. de Jumonville's escort had been taken. At the end of 1754, England sent troops under the command of General Braddock to Virginia, where there were already more soldiers than were necessary to ensure the security of this colony.

In a memorandum submitted on January 22, 1755, to our ambassador, the Duke of Mirepoix, in response to a communication from the French government, the King of England, alluding to the sending of General Braddock to Virginia, said: "That the defense of his rights and possessions and the protection of his subjects had been the only motives for the armament which had been sent to North America, which had been done without the intention of offending any power whatsoever, or of doing anything which could undermine the general peace."[286]

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At the time when the British ministry was making this statement to the king, General Braddock, who had just been called to the command in chief of the British troops in North America, was gathering all the forces at his disposal, and, shortly after, set out to attack Fort Duquesne. In an encounter which took place on July 9, a short distance from the fort, the English were completely defeated. On the general, who had lost his life in this fight, letters were found showing that the conduct of the English authorities was the result of very precise instructions from London. The English, to whom continual reinforcements were sent, became masters of Nova Scotia.

While these events were taking place on the other side of the ocean, the English government continued to assure the Versailles cabinet of its very earnest desire to reach an agreement with France; but by its demands it made any accommodation impossible. Hardly had the English ministers made a proposal to ours than they formulated a new one, modifying the first, thus postponing, by bias, the settlement of the questions in dispute. In 1748, it was a question, by virtue of the provisions of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, of appointing commissioners to determine the boundaries of Acadia and Canada. In 1755, England demanded, prior to any negotiation, the abandonment of vast territories that it designated and the demolition of several forts which assured the security of our possessions in North America. When this condition was fulfilled, and only then, would His Britannic Majesty consent, it was stated in a note delivered to the French government, to entrust to commissioners the settlement of other questions on which the two nations were in disagreement.[287]

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At the beginning of 1755, a squadron, placed under the command of Admiral Boscawen, was ready to put to sea. Our ambassador having expressed his surprise that the government kept the destination of this fleet secret, he was told that France had nothing to worry about this armament: the Versailles cabinet, the ministers added, could be certain that, "if acts of hostility were committed, it would not be the English who would start." Now, at the time when the King of England was speaking this, Admiral Boscawen was at sea, heading for the coast of America with orders to intercept a convoy that was to leave Brest for Canada. Having arrived at his destination, the English admiral, who had twenty-two warships under his command, including eleven vessels, established his cruise at the southern tip of the island of Newfoundland.

Lieutenant-General Macnemara left Brest on 3 May 1755, with six ships and three frigates, accompanying the division of squadron leader Dubois de Lamotte, which consisted of three ships, the *Entreprenant*, of seventy-four, on which was flown the admiral's flag, the *Bizarre* and the *Alcide*, of sixty-four, eleven ships armed in flute, some carrying twenty-two, others twenty-four guns, and four frigates. When he was out of the Bay of Biscay, Lieutenant-General Macnemara returned to Brest, and squadron leader Dubois de Lamotte headed for Quebec. The ships of his division, separated by the fog on the Newfoundland Bank, went individually to their destination. On June 22, all were reunited, with the exception of the *Alcide* and the *Lys*.[288]

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These two vessels had been chased off on June 10 by Admiral Boscawen's squadron. The *Alcide*, under Captain Hocquart, was attacked by two vessels, the *Dunkirk*, of sixty, and the *Torbay*, of seventy-four, the latter flying Admiral Boscawen's flag; the *Lys*, under Captain de Lorgeril, was opposed by two vessels of sixty, the *Défiance* and the *Fougueux*. The *Lys*, which was armed en flûte, carried only twenty-two cannons. The two French ships, fighting in full view of a squadron against superior forces, had neither hope of victory nor the possibility of escape; it was the honor of the flag that Captains Hocquart and de Lorgeril were defending. Both put up a stubborn resistance to the enemy; the *Alcide* and the *Lys*, completely unrigged, were unable to continue the fight when the colors were lowered. Squadron Leader Dubois de Lamotte put to sea on August 15, heading for Brest where he arrived on September 22. One of the ships of his division, the seventy-gun ship, the *Espérance*, armed en flûte and carrying only twenty-four guns, had remained off Quebec. On November 11, this ship, which was on its way back to France, was chased by four ships. After fighting the *Oxford*, seventy-four guns, the *Revenge* and the *Cormwal*, the latter carrying the flag of Rear-Admiral West, the completely unrigged French ship, no longer steering, lowered its flag. Its defense had been heroic. The captors, recognizing the impossibility of taking the *Espérance* to England, delivered this vessel to the flames. The *Opinidtre*, of sixty, armed in flute, had separated from the division of squadron leader de Lamotte, of which it was a part; it was cannonaded by an English frigate followed, at a short distance, by eight vessels. The French vessel continued its route, while responding to the fire of the frigate, and it succeeded in escaping the pursuit of the vessels which were chasing it.[289]

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Rear Admiral West, who had captured the *Espérance*, attempted, but without success, to intercept a French division under the command of Captain Duguay. The latter, after bringing supplies to our colony, returned to Brest without being seen by the squadron that was searching for him.

It was on June 10 that Admiral Boscawen, following instructions given in April, captured the ships *Alcide* and *Lys*. Now, on June 8, when the Court of London must have believed that its orders were being carried out, the cabinet of Saint-James, responding to a note from the French government, submitted to the Duke of Mirepoix a memorandum in which it was a question of "concessions which could be made, on both sides, for the preservation of the good harmony, so desired between the two Courts." History offers few examples of such duplicity. When the news of the capture of the *Alcide* and the *Lys* reached London, our ambassador asked for an explanation from the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The latter would only see in this event the result of a misunderstanding; expressing the hope that the good understanding existing between the two nations would not be affected, he asked that the negotiations which had begun continue their course. At the time when the head of the Foreign Office was speaking in this way, it was learned that nearly two hundred ships, richly laden, and a hundred Newfoundland fishermen and coasters, that is, three hundred merchant vessels, had just been captured by the warships and privateers of Great Britain. There is no expression to stigmatize the conduct of the English government. Determined to make war on us, it does not cease to protest its desire to preserve peace; it negotiates with the sole aim of arriving at the moment when, having completed its preparations, it will be ready to act, on all points, with superior forces.[290]

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Learning that we are sending supplies to our colonies in North America, the cabinet of Saint-James orders Admiral Boscawen to intercept the division of squadron leader Dubois de Lamotte. To weaken our navy, he gives the order to attack our merchant ships. Fifteen hundred soldiers and six thousand elite sailors are taken prisoner. Finally, these men, soldiers and sailors, are treated with calculated harshness, so that the excess of their misery will persuade them to take service on English ships.

These acts of piracy, which would not only have dishonoured a private individual but also called down upon the head of the guilty party an exemplary punishment, were denounced to Europe without England appearing to be moved by them. In the House of Commons, some voices were raised to demand that the merchant ships, captured in the midst of peace, in violation of the most elementary rules of international law, be returned to their owners. Writers protested against the conduct of the ministers. "You praise," said one of them, responding to the defenders of the government, "our ministers for having taken, before the declaration of war, all the French vessels that our shipowners encountered; you praise, I say, this action, which covers you with opprobrium and which makes you pass for barbarians who have renounced the feelings of humanity. What reasons can they cite to justify having caused the French sailors they had captured and imprisoned in prisons and dungeons to perish from hunger and misery? This cry from a few honest consciences remained without effect.[291]

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The capture of our merchant ships was an illicit profit, but it was a profit, and the ministers, convinced that the majority of the nation was with them, kept it. The French government recalled its ambassador, the Duke of Mirepoix, a man full of honor, driven by a sincere desire to serve his country well, but lacking the insight that the circumstances demanded. Trusting, to the point of blindness, in the ministers' words, he had never penetrated their true intentions, and the importance of the numerous armaments being built in English ports had always eluded him. Perhaps, for that very reason, it suited his government, which feared nothing so much as seeing its tranquility disturbed.

The Versailles cabinet did not want war; he might have avoided it by leading, with promptness and energy, the day after the conclusion of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, the question of the delimitation of Acadia and Canada. At that time, by making a few concessions, we would probably have arrived at a definitive arrangement, but, since 1748, we had never known how to either yield or resist appropriately. At the beginning of the year 1755, the cabinet of Versailles was still believing that, the day when serious difficulties arose between the two Courts, it would be enough, to end everything, to grant England some of the parts of the territories that she was claiming. In Paris, they had not seen, or, to speak more precisely, they had not wanted to see, the movement of opinion which was pushing the government of Great Britain to make war on us. National self-esteem did not forgive us the triumphs of Fontenoy and Lawfeld, and interests, disappointed in 1748, demanded the satisfactions that the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle had not given them.[292]

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The government of Louis XV had turned a blind eye to the evidence, and, by wanting to avoid war, had only made it more certain. After making useless claims against England for many months, it gave the order on January 23, 1756, to embargo English ships in our ports.

England had two objectives: the annihilation of our navy and the destruction of our trade. Led by unscrupulous but capable statesmen, it had taken steps consistent with the dual goal it was pursuing. At the time when the events that the Cabinet of Saint James had prepared were about to unfold, the English fleet was, relative to ours, on a formidable footing. It had nearly three hundred ships, comprising eighty-nine vessels, to which should be added thirty-two vessels of fifty, that is to say one hundred and twenty-one vessels of all ranks. Considerable supplies filled the arsenals in which a large staff of workers was gathered. In the month of January 1756, six squadrons, comprising seventy-six vessels, were at sea. The French government, weak, irresolute, foreseeing nothing, having no plan, believing, one day, in war, imagining, the next, that it could be avoided, was not prepared for a fight against England. Marshal de Noailles said: "I do not know if we have a fixed and well-meditated project. We think of nothing; we even disapprove of those who take the trouble to think of something. "Nothing better depicts the state of mind of the men who governed France at that time.

The Count of Maurepas, Minister of the Navy since 1723, had been replaced in 1749 by Rouillé, Count of Jouy.[293]

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The new minister, who had no understanding of the affairs of his department, failed to appreciate the role that naval officers should play; he increased the already very large number of administrators, giving them a preponderance that was detrimental to the good of the service. Mr. Rouillé favored commerce and science; numerous hydrographic projects were carried out during his ministry, and he is responsible for the founding of a naval academy headquartered in Brest. The minister was right to believe that a good navy includes personnel that are both experienced and educated; but to wage war, these personnel must have at their disposal sufficient equipment in quantity and equal in quality to that possessed by their adversaries. There was, for a time, talk during the ministry of the Count of Jouy, of building, in ten years, a fleet comprising more than one hundred ships of the line, but no follow-up was given to this project. Machault d'Arnouville became Minister of the Navy on July 29, 1754, in place of Rouillé who took the portfolio of foreign affairs. The new minister was, like his predecessor, foreign to the service of the navy; he obtained a little money, pushed the constructions and built some armaments. Nevertheless, at the beginning of the year 1756, after the capture of the *Alcide*, the *Lys* and the *Espérance*, we had, after deducting the ships which needed a general overhaul, only forty-five ships, among which there was perhaps a third which could not go to sea immediately; Finally, we did not have sufficient supplies in our arsenals to arm these vessels. Thus, at the time when war was about to break out, we saw, on one side, forty-five vessels, and on the other, one hundred and twenty-one; among the English, the arsenals were overflowing with supplies, and, in our ports, we did not even find what was necessary.[294]

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France, having to fight against England, had to avoid any war on land. Instead of following this simple policy, supported, moreover, by several members of the Council, Louis XV made an alliance with Austria that nothing justified, and he engaged in a continental war, thus falling into the trap set for France by the skilled men who governed England.

II

Towards the end of 1755, the government, after much hesitation, decided to build up armaments. The execution of this order encountered serious difficulties: sails, ropes, and even artillery were missing or in insufficient quantities. It was not permissible to rely on suppliers who, not having been paid for a long time, would not deliver anything until they had received money. Unfortunately the coffers were empty; it was not only the merchants who were demanding what the State owed them, the workers had considerable arrears of pay for which they waited in vain for payment. The authorities in the ports were obliged to resort to all sorts of expedients to comply with the instructions from Paris. The port of Toulon had received the order to equip twelve vessels; the whole winter was necessary to achieve this result. These twelve vessels formed a squadron, placed under the command of Lieutenant-General de la Galissonnière.[295]

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Troops, assembled in Marseille and Toulon, embarked on merchant ships and some state transports. The expeditionary force, approximately fifteen thousand strong, was commanded by the Duke of Richelieu. On April 10, the squadron and convoy anchored in the harbor of the Hyères Islands. After forty-eight hours at anchor, Lieutenant-General de la Galissonnière set sail for his destination, which remained unknown until then. The conquest of Minorca was the expedition's assigned goal. On the 18th, the squadron and convoy anchored off the town of Ciutadella, located on the island's southern coast. The troops, equipment, and supplies were immediately put ashore. Once this operation was completed, Admiral de la Galissonnière came to cruise off the port of Mahon to prevent relief supplies from entering Fort Saint-Philippe, located at the entrance to the channel. Two ships and three frigates, which were in the port, had put to sea upon learning of the landing of the French troops. By April 28, the Duke of Richelieu was master of the entire island except for Fort Saint-Philippe, which housed three thousand English troops.

Toward the end of February, the government had marched troops to the coasts of Picardy, Normandy, and Brittany. This demonstration, which could not have been significant, not being supported by sufficient maritime resources, caused an inexplicable uproar throughout England. It seemed that a French army was about to land on British soil. The arrival of Hessian and Hanoverian troops, called up in haste, was not enough to calm things down. The government, losing its grasp of the situation, did not dare to use the naval forces assembled in the ports of the kingdom, fearing that if it removed them, it would arouse public opinion against it.[296]

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The ministers were aware not only of the maritime and military preparations being made at Toulon, but also of the very purpose of the expedition; nevertheless, it was only at the beginning of April that they decided to send Admiral Byng to the Mediterranean. This admiral set sail from Spithead on the 5th with ten ships, carrying four thousand men, intended to reinforce the garrison of Fort Saint-Philippe.

The small number of ships given to Admiral Byng demonstrated the disarray reigning in the government regions. The ministry expected that the admiral would find three ships upon arriving at Gibraltar, but what certainty could it have that these vessels had not been captured? Assuming the most favorable scenario, that is to say, that these three ships were at Gibraltar, Byng had only thirteen vessels. The composition of the Toulon squadron, which had been in training for more than six months, was known in London. To send thirteen vessels to fight twelve would have made the outcome of an encounter doubtful. If we were victorious, Minorca would have fallen into our hands. Admiral Byng learned at Gibraltar of the landing of the French troops; he put to sea with thirteen vessels, and on May 19, his discoveries signaled our squadron. On both sides, maneuvers were made to gain the advantage of the wind; on the 20th, in the morning, we were to windward of the English when the breeze, until then very irregular, put us, passing to the east, under the lee of the enemy. Around one o'clock in the afternoon, the two squadrons were running on starboard tack, the French holding closest and the English closing in on us.[297]

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Squadron commanders Commander de Glandevès and Commander de Laclue commanded our advance guard, the former, and the latter, the rearguard. At 2:00, a very fierce battle ensued between the two advance guards, then the firing quickly spread along the entire line; it ceased at 5:30. The various phases of this engagement can be summarized as follows.

The French squadron, which was to leeward of the English, could not take the initiative in the battle; it awaited the enemy, formed in a very close line of battle. Admiral Byng attempted to engage our rearguard with part of his forces, but was unable to do so. An attempt by Lieutenant-General de la Galissonnière to place the enemy vanguard between two fires was no more successful. Our well-aimed fire caused our adversaries numerous casualties; a few English vessels, disabled, falling upon those following them, threw the enemy line into disarray. When the English moved away, Lieutenant-General de la Galissonnière was unable to pursue them because our vanguard, which had been badly mistreated, was no longer able to obey his signals. On June 16, a few days before this engagement, France had officially declared war on England.

Admiral Byng, charged with a mission whose importance could not escape him, found it impossible to fulfill. In this first engagement, he had lost only the battlefield; in a second, he risked leaving ships in our hands. In his opinion, retreat was necessary. Not wanting to bear the responsibility for this decision alone, he convened a Council of War. This declared "that a large part of the squadron being out of action, it would have been imprudent to return to the charge against an enemy who, from the beginning of the action, had been superior and who had not yet lost any of his strength."[298]

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Based on this deliberation, Admiral Byng went to Gibraltar. When the events we have just reported became known in London, Admiral Byng received orders to return to England to report on his conduct. The new commander of the Mediterranean squadron, Admiral Hawke, put to sea with seventeen ships and headed for Minorca. The French squadron had disappeared, and the white ensign was flying over Fort Saint-Philippe. After the capitulation of this place, which took place on January 30, the troops, immediately re-embarked, returned to Toulon with the squadron.

The capture of Minorca was not the only unfortunate event that befell our adversaries during the course of 1756. The English had suffered a significant loss in North America. A body of troops operating against us had Fort Oswego, built at the entrance to the Onondaga River, as their base of operations. A large number of personnel, considerable equipment, and supplies were gathered at this point when our troops arrived. Fort Oswego was taken on August 16, after a siege of several days; sixteen hundred men and one hundred cannons fell into our hands.

Misfortune had also pursued the English in India; the Nawab of Bengal had captured Calcutta on June 26. When the ship carrying Admiral Byng anchored in an English port, public opinion, long overexcited, had lost all composure. How, with the immense preparations made for war, could one begin with defeats?[299]

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From all parts of the kingdom, addresses were arriving, demanding, in forceful terms, a severe investigation into the causes of the recent disasters. The city, the powerful city, which leads all of England, seeing affairs suspended and trade at a standstill, was raising cries for vengeance; such agitation reigned in people's minds that the government had everything to fear, even a revolution. The ministry had committed two errors, the first by giving the admiral insufficient forces, and the second by sending him off too late; this is what an investigation, conducted with the sole concern of establishing the truth, would have easily demonstrated. The ministers, little anxious to see their conduct submitted to the examination of a parliamentary commission, hastened to declare that Admiral Byng had not complied with their instructions. A general outcry arose against the unfortunate admiral; the victim they were looking for had been found. The government, appearing to yield to the pressure of public opinion, brought Admiral Byng before a Council of War. Judges, deaf to the cry of their conscience, found him guilty. There was, however, one honourable exception; a member of the Council of War, Admiral Forbes, declared that "when it came to signing an act for the shedding of blood, a man should be guided only by the movements of his own conscience and not by the opinion of others." The Council of War, shrinking, at the last moment, from its work, recommended the condemned man to royal clemency; the judges probably wanted the Crown to share their responsibility in this purely political affair. The ministry, beset by the opposition, had sunk into turmoil. In the new administration, which came into power in December 1756, there was Pitt, famous since then under the name of Earl Chatham.[300]

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At the risk of compromising his immense popularity and his position in the cabinet, this statesman spoke in favor of Byng in the House of Commons. Supported by Lord Temple, First Lord of the Admiralty, he intervened with the King to have the latter, using his prerogative, modify the sentence that had been passed. These courageous efforts were in vain; the sentence was unjust, but it reflected the sentiments of the English people. George, who had felt his throne tremble, was inexorable. The execution took place on February 27, 1757.

Upon the arrival of Lieutenant-General de la Galissonnière in Toulon, the ships that had suffered in the Battle of Minorca were repaired. A few ships, whose fitting out was complete, joined the squadron. The latter, sixteen ships strong, was in the harbor at the end of August, ready to sail. The admiral, learning that Admiral Byng's successor, Admiral Hawke, was holding the sea with seventeen ships, wrote to Paris to ask permission to go to meet him. All, captains, officers, sailors, full of confidence in their leader, impatiently awaited the minister's reply. This proposal was not accepted. Unfortunately for the navy, Admiral de la Galissonnière, who had been ill for some time, was obliged to leave his command; he died on October 26, 1756, before arriving in Paris where he was going. Lieutenant-General de Massiac was placed in command of the squadron, which at that time consisted of seventeen ships. On November 1st, the order arrived to disarm twelve ships; only five ships, placed under the command of squadron leader de Laclue, were retained. How can such a measure be explained? The squadron, comprising thirteen ships, having taken part in the battle before Mahon, had, by that very fact, acquired not only solidity, but also confidence in its own worth.[301]

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This moral strength, which cannot be improvised and which is the guarantee of success, the minister, instead of applying all his care to preserving and even increasing it, hastened to destroy it. But for the ignorant men who, from Paris, directed the navy, the question of money was everything and the military question nothing. In the midst of the war against England, that is to say, with the greatest maritime power, the government had twelve ships disarmed to avoid the expense, without asking how it would find a squadron the day it wanted to act at sea.

Captain Daubigny was going to the Caribbean Sea with a ship and two frigates when, on March 11, 1756, a short distance from Martinique, the English ship, the *Warwick*, of sixty-four, was sighted. Chased by the French division, the English ship was joined by the frigate, of thirty-four, the *Atalante*, captain of the Chaffault. Wanting to deprive the enemy ship of the possibility of escaping, the captain of the *Atalante*, although he was far from his convoys, engaged in action. Compensating, by the skill of his maneuvers, for the weakness of his artillery, he succeeded in putting the *Warwick* in a position to move away. The English captain headed towards the French ship to lower his colors for the latter, but Captain Daubigny, judging the *Warwick's* position hopeless, did not fire a cannon shot. The *Warwick* surrendered to the *Atalante*.

Captain de Kersaint left Brest at the end of 1756 with four vessels, one of which was armed en flûte. After destroying several English trading posts on the African coast and capturing merchant ships, he headed for the Antilles.[302]

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The division was about to leave Saint-Domingue to go to France with a merchant convoy, when it became aware of English ships coming from Jamaica to observe it. Commander de Kersaint decided to go to meet the English and fight them, without being hindered by his convoy. He set sail during the night of October 20, with the ships *Intrépide*, of seventy-four, which he commanded, the *Opiniatre*, of sixty, Captain Mollieu, and the *Greenwich*, of fifty, Captain Foucault; to these three ships, he added the ship armed in flute, the *Sceptre*, Captain Clavel. The next day, three ships were sighted, racing towards our ships; The ships in sight were the *Dreadnought* and the *Princess Augusta*, of sixty, and the *Edinburgh*, of seventy. The action began around four o'clock in the afternoon; at five thirty, the enemy ships, which were to windward, took the closest and moved away. The French division, which had suffered damage to its masts which prevented it from pursuing them, headed for Cap Français. The *Intrépide* lost its mast before reaching the anchorage. The brave Captain de Kersaint, wounded during the combat, had not ceased to direct the movements of his ships. The English cruiser having disappeared, the objective pursued was achieved; after hastily repairing itself, the division, accompanying the convoy, set sail for France.[303]

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BOOK XIII

Bad weather renders the English preparations for attacking Louisbourg useless. - Failure of an expedition against the port of Rochefort. - An English squadron captures three French vessels in the Mediterranean. - New expedition against Louisbourg. - Attack on Ticonderaga. - Losses suffered by the enemy. - English expeditions on our coasts. - Cancale. - Cherbourg. - Saint-Cast. - English failure at Martinique. - Capture of Guadeloupe, Les Saintes, Marie-Galante, and La Désirade. - English success in North America. - Capture of Quebec. - Death of Generals Montcalm and Wolf. - Planned landing in England. - Squadron leader de Laclue leaves Toulon. - Dispersal of his squadron. - Battle of August 17 - Lagos Affair.

I

The cabinet of which Pitt was a member had barely lasted a few months; formed in December 1756, it no longer existed by April 1757. Pitt, very popular, had the king and the aristocracy against him; for nearly three months, England was without a ministry. The king had to bow to the irresistible movement of opinion that brought Pitt to power; he entered the cabinet formed on June 29, 1757, by the Duke of Newcastle. In the new administration, Pitt had supreme command of the war and foreign affairs. Surprisingly, the English, at the beginning of this war, which they had sought, desired, and prepared for a long time, were struck with terror.[304]

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The political horizon, on the other side of the strait, seemed laden with the darkest clouds; the future appeared to bring only catastrophes; the English nation already saw itself humiliated, defeated, subjugated. It is reported that Pitt, speaking to a political figure, said at that time: "I am sure that I can save this country and that no one else can." History offers few examples of a people stricken, without legitimate cause, with such profound discouragement. Pitt's arrival in power having restored some calm to minds, the English considered putting into effect the projects that had been the determining cause of the war. Coveting possession of our North American colonies, they resolved to seize Cape Breton or Isle Royale, which commands the mouth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence; the success of this operation would lead them to Quebec. Ships carrying troops and supplies were sent to Halifax for the attack on Louisbourg, the capital and principal port of Isle Royale.

The French government, which had not taken the necessary measures in a timely manner to ensure the security of the North American colonies, had been concerned, since the outbreak of hostilities, with sending relief to Louisbourg. Lieutenant-General Dubois de Lamotte, who had fortunately arrived on June 19, 1757, in front of this place with nine ships, was rallied shortly after by the divisions of Squadron Leader de Beaufremont and Captain Durevest, the first coming from Saint-Domingue and the second from Toulon. Lieutenant-General de Lamotte, who then had sixteen ships under his command, established batteries on land and had some of his ships take up a position allowing them to defend the entrance to the pass.[305]

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Vice-Admiral Holburne appeared in September with nineteen ships, but a south-easterly gale of extreme violence rendered him powerless. His ships were scattered; some were razed like pontoons, others lost part of their masts, and one of them was thrown ashore. Finding himself, as a result of this sea event, unable to undertake anything, Vice-Admiral Holburne set sail for England. Our squadron had little food left; moreover, an epidemic disease was raging with exceptional severity among the crews. Finally, there was reason to believe that the fort of Louisbourg would not be attacked during the course of the year. Faced with this situation, Lieutenant-General Dubois de Lamotte decided to return to France. Barely out of the country, our ships were attacked by a south-easterly blast, just as the English squadron had been. Some vessels returned to Louisbourg, the others continued their route and arrived at Brest.

The Court of London was strongly solicited by its allies to attempt some enterprise on our coasts. France, having to defend itself against English attacks, would find itself obliged to keep some of its troops, which would have the consequence of diminishing the strength of the armies operating in Germany. England resolved to direct its efforts against one of our ports. On September 21, 1757, Admiral Hawke anchored in the Basque harbor with seventeen vessels, escorting fifty-five transports, on which were embarked infantry, artillery, and cavalry troops. The importance of this armament announced great projects; according to the orders of the English government, the expeditionary force, put ashore, on the arrival of the squadron, was to march quickly on Rochefort and destroy the arsenal.[306]

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Since the objective was kept secret, it was believed in London that this operation, assuming it was vigorously conducted, would be completed before the arrival of sufficient forces to prevent its execution. Things were far from happening as they had been arranged in the office of the Minister of War. After wasting several days searching for the most favorable landing point, the English generals decided that, before marching on Rochefort, it was necessary to seize the island of Aix. The island, which was devoid of any means of defense, was taken and given over to pillage. The English, then returning to the original plan, were once again concerned with the question of landing, when they learned that reinforcements, the importance of which they perhaps exaggerated, had arrived at Rochefort. The possibility of a surprise attack becoming very problematic, a Council of War, convened to examine this situation, declared that the departure of the squadron was essential. The English experienced profound discontent on learning the result of the immense preparations made for the destruction of a French port. It seemed that we had returned to the year 1756, when the news of the capture of Minorca had reached London. Already some voices were calling for the death of the guilty. The government did not hide the fact that it shared the feelings of the crowd; the ministers expressed their opinion with all the greater vivacity because, since the military world severely criticized the plan of this campaign, they too could be sought. The leaders of the expedition, blamed by a Council of Inquiry, charged with examining their conduct, were brought before a Council of War; they had the good fortune to find judges who, without worrying about the rumors from outside, acquitted them.[307]

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Since the beginning of the war, England had suffered nothing but setbacks; it had lost the island of Minorca and several important positions in North America. Bad weather had rendered useless the preparations made to attack Louisbourg; finally, the expedition, aimed at destroying the port of Rochefort, had completely failed. It was therefore on our side that the advantage lay. Unfortunately, the numerical superiority of the enemy, the energy and vigor of its government, and the lively impetus given by the Cabinet of Saint James to the affairs of war, were bound to promptly and inevitably change this state of affairs. At the beginning of 1758, Admiral Osborne, having eighteen vessels under his command, had our movements monitored by ships stationed from Gibraltar to Toulon. Warned in advance of the departure of our ships, the English admiral could set sail and wait for them in the strait. Under these conditions, it was, if not impossible, at least very difficult for a squadron coming from Toulon to pass into the ocean without being seen by the enemy. Squadron leader de Laclue, who had left Toulon with six vessels to go to the Caribbean Sea, learning at sea that Admiral Osborne was cruising in the strait with his entire army, entered the port of Cartagena. Two ships, sent from Toulon, joined him on February 6, announcing the imminent arrival of the ships Orphée, Oriflamme and Foudroyant. These ships appeared on February 25; squadron leader de Laclue, who intended to set sail the next day, was imprudent enough to leave them outside the port of Cartagena. These three ships intended to remain underground, but a very violent northwest wind, which rose during the night, drove them out to sea.[308]

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A very violent northwesterly wind, which rose during the night, drove them out to sea. At daybreak, the English fleet was sighted. Admiral Osborne had left Gibraltar and advanced along the Spanish coast to reconnoiter the French division, whose presence he knew was in Cartagena, and intercept the ships sent from Toulon to join it.

The ship *Oriflamme*, captained by Duguay, which had taken the shore tack, was able to reach the port of Las Aguilas, where it found itself safe. The *Orphée*, captained by d'Herville, attacked by two ships, the *Revenge* and the *Berwick*, lowered its flag after prolonging its resistance until seven o'clock in the evening. The *Foudroyant*, Captain Duquesne, fought the *Monmouth*, the *Swiftsure* and the *Hamptoncourt*; it surrendered around two o'clock in the morning. Squadron leader de Laclue, when day broke, saw the English pursuing our three ships; the winds not allowing him to leave Cartagena, he did not have to consider whether or not he should go to the aid of the ships engaged. Thus, this campaign, absolutely useless, had cost us two ships. Without doubt, squadron leader de Laclue had committed a serious error in not giving the *Orphée*, the *Oriflamme* and the *Foudroyant* the order to enter Cartagena, but what can we think of the direction given to the operations of our navy. It is known in Paris that there are, not in the Mediterranean, but at Gibraltar, eighteen English vessels specially charged with monitoring the strait, and squadron leader de Laclue is sent with six vessels. Finally, when he is at Cartagena, where he thought it prudent to stop, two vessels are sent to him, then three, and among the people who direct the navy, there is not one capable of supposing that Admiral Osborne, informed of the presence of six French vessels at Cartagena, can come, along the coast of Spain, as far as this port, and that, in these conditions, the vessels sent individually to join squadron leader de Laclue are compromised.[309]

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If the *Foudroyant*, the *Orphée* and the *Oriflamme* had arrived on the 26th, that is to say the next day, they would have found themselves, at daybreak, in the middle of the English fleet. Squadron leader Laclue received the order to return to Toulon where he arrived towards the end of April.

Not only did the English not lose sight of their plans for our North American colonies, but, as time went on, they redoubled their ardor and sacrifices to achieve the goal they were pursuing. The attack on Louisbourg could not take place in 1757, Admiral Holburne's squadron having been dispersed by bad weather. It must be said, moreover, that the presence of Lieutenant-General de Lamotte's squadron, sixteen ships strong, removed all chance of success from this enterprise. In the first months of 1758, preparations were made for a new expedition. Admiral Boscawen appeared, on June 1, off Louisbourg, with one hundred and fifty-one warships, including twenty-three vessels and eighteen frigates. This fleet carried fourteen thousand men, commanded by Major General Amhest, a large artillery and mortars. The governor of Louisbourg, the Chevalier de Drucourt, had, under his command, a little less than three thousand regular troops and five to six hundred militiamen and Indians. The place was in very poor condition; it had little food, and yet the governor had to feed, in addition to the garrison, the inhabitants and the people from the countryside who had come to seek refuge in the city.[310]

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To Admiral Boscawen's twenty-three ships, we had only one division to oppose, comprising five ships, three of which were armed en flûte, and two frigates. When the English fleet appeared, the division commander, Captain Desgouttes, asked the governor for permission to sail; this permission was not granted. The Chevalier de Drucourt hoped that help would be sent to him from Canada; not knowing when reinforcements might arrive, he had an imperative duty to gain time, that is to say, to prolong his resistance by using all the means at his disposal. Now the ships, called upon to defend the approaches to the place, played an important role.

For several days, the state of the sea did not allow the English to communicate with the land. On the 8th, the surf having become less strong, the landing began. The French, who, at all points where this operation could be carried out, had raised batteries and built entrenchments, inflicted serious losses on the enemy, but they could not prevent them from gaining land. Our troops, retreating slowly before superior forces, re-entered the place. On June 11, the siege operations began. The English established mortar batteries to destroy our ships which were causing them a lot of harm. On July 21, the *Entreprenant*, of seventy-four, one of the two ships armed in war, was set on fire by a bomb and blew up; the explosion spread fire to two other vessels, the *Capricieux* and the *Célèbre*, armed in flute, which were devoured by the flames. The disappearance of these three vessels was, for the defense, an irreparable loss. We had only two vessels left, the *Prudent*, of seventy-four, armed in war, the *Bienfaisant*, of sixty-four, armed in flute, and the frigates the *Diane* and the *Écho*.[311]

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Admiral Boscawen, appreciating the services our ships were providing, decided to attempt a raid to seize those that remained. Following his orders, Captain Laforey entered the port with boats manned by six hundred men. Protected by a very dark night and the noise of artillery, the English arrived, unseen, alongside the *Prudent* and the *Bienfaisant*.

These two ships, which were guarded by only a small number of men, were easily captured. The crews, both to be sheltered from the bombardment and to help the garrison, spent the night on land. We had committed a serious error in not foreseeing the bold action that had just deprived the defense of its last resource. The English boats, driven by a favorable wind, left the harbor with the *Prudent* and the *Bienfaisant* in tow; the first of these vessels, having run aground, was given over to the flames, the second was able to be steered out of range of the fires of the place. The garrison, since the beginning of the siege, had received no other reinforcements than three hundred Canadians and sixty Indians; the governor was warned that he could not count on any other help. On July 26, the place surrendered; Saint-Jean Island, included in the capitulation, was occupied by the English. The frigates *Diane* and *Echo* fell into the hands of the enemy. Two thousand five hundred and eleven officers, sailors and marines were taken prisoners of war; eleven hundred and twenty-four were fit for service, and the other thirteen hundred and forty-seven, that is to say more than half, were sick or wounded. It can be seen that the crews had taken an active part in the defense of Louisbourg.[312]

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The capture of this place was the greatest success the enemy had achieved since the beginning of the war. The possession of Île Royale was of capital importance to our adversaries, Louisbourg being the departure point for numerous privateers who caused the greatest harm to Anglo-American trade. The St. Lawrence was open to enemy fleets, and they would henceforth encounter no obstacles in reaching Quebec.

While the English were besieging Louisbourg, major expeditions were directed against the forts defending the entrance to Canada. Major General Abercombie descended Lake Champlain in a large flotilla carrying sixteen thousand men, which he landed on July 5, a short distance from Ticonderagá. The English general wanted to take this place by surprise, knowing that the French were on the march to rescue it. The garrison, sheltered by the entrenchments, let the enemy approach before opening fire. Shot at point-blank range, decimated by artillery, the English retreated in the greatest disorder. The British troops, and especially the Scots, had displayed the most brilliant courage in carrying out the imprudent orders of their general. The enemy's losses were two thousand men, including one hundred and twenty officers. This success, honorable for our arms, could not change the overall situation. The glorious leader of the French troops in Canada, the Marquis de Montcalm, no longer receiving help, saw himself forced to abandon the most distant posts, and to leave, in those he retained, only insufficient garrisons.[313]

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On June 1, 1758, two squadrons left Portsmouth. The first, commanded by Admiral Anson, was tasked with blockading our ocean ports so that the second could safely fulfill its mission. The latter, under the command of Commodore Howe, escorted by a convoy carrying troops, anchored in Cancale Bay on June 5. The commander-in-chief of the landing force, the Duke of Marlborough, was put ashore with fourteen thousand men. After completing the necessary work to establish an entrenched camp that would ensure a solid position in the event of a retreat, the English marched on Saint-Malo. This city was not in a condition to withstand a regular siege, nevertheless the Duke of Marlborough was able to convince himself that he did not have sufficient means to take it. He burned a hundred merchant ships and stores containing equipment and supplies intended for the navy. This exploit accomplished, the English returned to Cancale, re-embarked and set sail, going to Cherbourg. The damage caused by the convoy in a violent gale, the increasing number of sick soldiers, determined the leaders of the expedition to return to England. Anything that tended to destroy the maritime power of France was very popular on the other side of the strait; therefore, public opinion welcomed the results of the Duke of Marlborough's campaign, however modest they were. The government, or rather the leading minister in the cabinet, Pitt, found in this approval an encouragement to persevere on a path that would lead, or so it believed, to the destruction of French ports.

On August 1, a new expedition left England and anchored off Cherbourg on the 6th. Lieutenant-General Bligk, who had replaced the Duke of Marlborough, who had been sent to Germany, landed with his troops under the protection of the squadron.[314]

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The city of Cherbourg, very lightly defended as far as the part facing the sea was concerned, was completely open on the land side. The English entered without encountering any resistance; they demolished the fortifications, but what they were particularly careful to do was to leave nothing standing of what constituted the port; the ships were burned and the cannons embarked on the fleet. Lieutenant-General Bligk, after levying a tax on the city, returned to England. This expedition had been more important than the first; it returned having destroyed a port, whose future role worried our adversaries, demolished fortifications and captured cannons. The interests of England had been well served, but the troops, not having found themselves in the presence of the enemy, had played only a very insignificant role. This was not how things were envisaged by the British government. The cannons and mortars, taken from Cherbourg, crossed the city of London, adorned with flags, surrounded by soldiers marching to the sound of war music. The fleet had received orders not to land its troops; shortly after, it set sail, heading for Saint-Malo. The English, disembarking in the bay of Saint-Lunaire, marched on this city with the intention of attacking it, but they were soon to recognize that this plan was impracticable. While the enemy was deliberating on the course of action to be taken, Commodore Howe announced that, finding himself in danger at Saint-Lunaire, he was proceeding to the bay of Saint-Cast, situated a few leagues to the west of his anchorage. The troops set out to re-establish their communications with the fleet; emboldened by the memory of previous expeditions, they penetrated into the interior, exchanging a few rifle shots with isolated partisans who, taking advantage of every favorable circumstance, came to fire on their flanks.[315]

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But soon the English learned that the Duke of Aiguillon, governor of Brittany, was advancing to meet them; they then headed for the bay of Saint-Cast, but new skirmishes, more serious than the previous ones, delayed their advance.

The embarkation of the English troops had barely begun when the French appeared on the heights surrounding the bay. Our soldiers, quickly arriving at the beach by a sunken path, rushed the English and pushed them into the sea. The ships and frigates covered the beach with cannonballs, but Commodore Howe, seeing that the English were as much at risk of being hit as the French, ordered the firing to cease. The squadron's boats, threatened by our artillery, having moved away, the officers and soldiers, remaining on the shore, laid down their arms. The enemy's losses in killed, drowned and prisoners exceeded two thousand men. During the course of these three expeditions, or rather these military promenades, since, until the day of the re-embarkation at Saint-Cast, we had not offered any resistance to the enemy, the English had committed real acts of barbarism, ravaging the country in their path, burning and pillaging private properties, without their conduct being justified by any legitimate reason. These expeditions seemed to be a reminiscence of the incursions made formerly by the Normans. The affair of Saint-Cast had, in itself, no importance; in a great war, the loss of two thousand men does not imply a combat whose results can have serious consequences.[316]

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However, the French, and especially the inhabitants of Brittany and Normandy, were pleased to learn that the authorities charged with their defense had finally succeeded in reaching the English and punishing them for the acts of brigandage they had committed. The English, still fresh in their memories of the triumphant march of the cannons captured at Cherbourg through the city of London, were deeply disappointed. Public opinion was already agitated, expressing its discontent and seeking responsibility, but the popularity of Pitt, the promoter of the expeditions to our shores, and especially the good news from America, made everyone forget everything.

II

A squadron of nine vessels, under the command of Commodore Moore, escorting ships carrying troops, headed towards the island of Martinique at the end of 1758. On January 6, 1759, General Hopson landed west of Fort Royal, under the squadron's protection; he intended to lay siege to the town. The English had barely begun their movement when they became very alarmed by the difficult terrain. The roads they were to take had been rendered impassable. The general was well aware that he would have to fight regular troops joined by militias, who enjoyed a well-deserved reputation for bravery. An initial engagement, which did not turn out to the advantage of his advance guard, gave him serious fears about the outcome of the expedition.[317]

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He then appealed to Commodore Moore, requesting his assistance in the attack on Fort Royal, but the commodore declared that his squadron could not come close enough to the coast to act in concert with the troops. Under these conditions, despairing of fulfilling the mission entrusted to him, General Hopson reembarked. The decision was then made to attack Guadeloupe. On January 23, Commodore Moore took up position off Basse-Terre with his squadron, which was joined by several bomb galleys. Four vessels opened fire on the fortress, and the others targeted the town and the batteries that were positioned to oppose a landing; finally, bombs were dropped continuously on Basse-Terre. When the fire ceased at the end of the day, the fortress was destroyed and the town reduced to ashes. On the 24th, General Hopson, having landed with his troops, occupied the town and the citadel. The inhabitants, together with the weak garrison of Guadeloupe, put up energetic resistance to the English advance into the interior, but the enemy having succeeded in successively dislodging the French forces from the positions they occupied, the governor was forced to accept a capitulation which was signed on May 1st, that is to say a little more than three months after the bombardment of Basse-Terre. A woman, Mrs. Ducharmey, took a glorious part in the sustained struggle against the English. This lady, who commanded, in person, a company of Blacks, armed by her care and at her own expense, has left a name in the annals of Guadeloupe. The capitulation had just been signed when the squadron leader, Bompart, coming from Brest with troops, appeared in front of the island; informed of the situation, he hastened to put back to sea.[318]

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If the long-awaited help had arrived twenty-four hours earlier, events would have been profoundly altered. The English, who had already suffered heavy losses, would have re-embarked, even if they had not been forced to surrender. Such was the English opinion. Les Saintes and La Désirade capitulated on May 9, and Marie-Galante on the 26th. Squadron Leader Bompart had the good fortune to return to Brest during the absence of Admiral Hawke, who was cruising off the port with twenty ships. A gale had momentarily driven the enemy away.

At the beginning of 1759, several corps of troops from New England captured the fortified posts that ensured our communications with Louisiana. These successes, which opened the road to Canada for the British armies, while causing great joy in London and the colonies of northern America, did not completely satisfy public opinion. Both the English and American colonists were demanding the conquest of the capital of our North American settlements.

In June, a fleet of twenty-one ships of the line, escorting numerous transports, landed ten thousand men under the command of General Wolf on the Island of Orleans, a short distance from Quebec. The Chevalier de Ramsay, a Scottish Jacobite in the service of France, occupied the city with a small garrison. The Marquis de Montcalm, gathering the troops at his disposal, took up, outside the place, a position in which he believed himself able to resist forces superior to those he commanded. The Marquis de Montcalm proposed to remain on the defensive, and thus wait for the moment when winter, which arrived quickly in Canada, would force the English to withdraw.[319]

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General Wolf's first efforts were aimed at bringing us to a decisive engagement; in one of the attempts made to achieve this result, his troops suffered heavy losses. The English were greatly discouraged, and the young general who commanded them already saw himself sacrificed by his government, exposed to the furious clamor of the London populace, and brought, to satisfy the passions of the crowd, before a Council of War.

The English navy lent the most useful assistance to the army's operations. Ships prevented the arrival of supplies coming to us from the upper river; others protected the batteries erected by the besiegers to fire on the city. Vessels, occupying different anchorages, left the Marquis de Montcalm uncertain as to the point at which he would be attacked. These maneuvers, which were intended to force him to leave his camp, were not without result. A division of the squadron having gone up beyond the city, the Marquis de Montcalm believed it necessary to detach two thousand men, under the command of Bougainville, to monitor this movement, the purpose of which he did not clearly see. The besieged launched incendiary boats, but the English navy, which was exercising active surveillance, managed to divert them. Such was the situation when an unexpected event suddenly changed the face of things. General Wolf, pressed for time, the season was advancing, took a bold step which was suggested to him, it is said, by a young officer of a Scottish regiment.[320]

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On September 11, the fleet, on which he embarked his troops, anchored above the city. Then, as night fell, all the boats the enemy could muster were filled with soldiers. These boats, protected by the ships that made the same movement, descended with the current and landed at the foot of mountains considered inaccessible. The French sentries, being deceived by English officers who spoke our language, did not raise the alarm when the first boats landed the men they were carrying. The latter, acting with extreme speed, captured the sentries, surprised a post established at that point, and began climbing the mountain. The next day, at daybreak, the English troops were drawn up in line of battle on the Heights of Abraham.

When this news reached the Marquis de Montcalm, he initially believed it was a feint devised by the enemy to draw him away from his position, but he soon became convinced that this serious event was all too real. The English army, in its current position, could, in concert with the fleet, attack the city from its weak point. Since only a battle could save Quebec, the Marquis de Montcalm, despite the numerical inferiority of his troops, resolved to fight it. On the 13th, the two armies were facing each other and the action began; it was unfavorable to us. At the moment when the retreat of our troops left the enemy master of the battlefield, the two thousand men sent, as mentioned above, to the banks of the Saint Lawrence to monitor the movements of the English fleet, appeared in the enemy's rear. Bougainville, with a correct understanding of the situation, had returned, but he arrived too late. His intervention could have no other result than the loss of his detachment, so he withdrew, after exchanging a few rifle shots with the rearguard of the English army.[321]

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The Marquis de Montcalm's troops also retreated into the interior of the country. Both sides had fought with the greatest intrepidity; the leaders of both armies, driven by the need to win, had given their all. General Wolf, marching at the head of his troops, received a first wound and, shortly after, a second; he continued to direct the movements of his soldiers when, hit a third time, he fell. Before dying, Wolf learned that he was victorious.

The Marquis de Montcalm was sent to Canada in May 1756 as commander-in-chief of the French troops in North America. As soon as he arrived, he gave military operations a skillful and energetic leadership. His successes, while inspiring the Anglo-Americans with the most lively fears about the outcome of the struggle, resulted in bringing a large number of Indian tribes under our flags. England became worried, Pitt sent fleets and armies, and the Anglo-Americans sent militias. Abandoned by France, receiving no help, Montcalm did not despair of the future. His courage, his military talents, his skill, the influence he exercised over his troops, his influence over the Indians made up for what he lacked for a long time, but his strength was exhausted by fighting and disease; he had no more supplies and his troops were barely clothed. In 1759, sixty thousand men surrounded Canada. When Quebec City was threatened by General Wolf and Admiral Saunders' fleet, Montcalm chose a position in which he hoped his troops, despite their numerical inferiority, could defy the enemy's efforts; with the onset of winter, the enemy would be forced to withdraw. General Wolf's bold maneuver thwarted his calculations.[322]

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Seeing the English on the Heights of Abraham, he decided to risk a battle to save Quebec. Always in the front ranks, to set an example, he received several wounds that prevented him from retaining command of his army. He died the next day, saying: "I will not sign the surrender of Quebec." This was his supreme consolation. This illustrious soldier deserved better fortune; he served his country at a time when the incapacity of ministers, their negligence, and the poor direction given to all operations were leading to disasters against which no effort, no goodwill, no devotion could prevail.

On September 18, 1759, the Chevalier de Ramsay, having lost communication with our troops and unable to defend himself against the concerted attacks of the navy and the army, capitulated. Enemy fire had destroyed every house in Quebec.

III

While England's naval forces, increasing daily, were urging us to conduct our maritime operations with extreme caution, which unfortunately had not yet been done, it was decided in Paris that the time had come to take the war to the other side of the Channel. Now, a landing on the coast of Great Britain was, of all the plans that could be formed, the one that least suited our situation.[323]

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Before thinking of fighting the English in their own country, we had to ask ourselves whether we were able to ensure the passage of our troops. Even a superficial examination of the state of our navy was enough to demonstrate that we did not have the means. The very length of the preparations excluded any idea of acting by surprise; it also allowed the English to assemble, which was easy for them, forces superior to ours. It was therefore a passage by force that we had to carry out. Under these conditions, how could we suppose that the French squadron, hampered by a considerable convoy, would defeat an enemy, warned of our plans, prepared for the fight long in advance, and greatly superior in terms of numbers. Once this plan was adopted, it was decided that twelve ships and three frigates, placed under the command of squadron leader de Laclue, would leave Toulon, cross the strait and join the naval force assembled at Brest. It could not be ignored in Paris that, the previous year, the same squadron leader, leaving Toulon to go to the Antilles, had not been able to get past Cartagena, the strait being then guarded by Admiral Osborne with eighteen ships. Admiral Boscawen, placed in 1759 at the head of the Mediterranean squadron, had the same instructions as his predecessor. He was ordered to monitor the forces we had at Toulon and, if they came out, to deliver a decisive battle to them. Since the question of the descent into England had been raised, the orders given to Admiral Boscawen had taken on a more pressing character. We can therefore see how difficult it was for the Toulon squadron to cross the strait without being seen and pursued, that is to say, without a fight. Squadron leader de Laclue left Toulon on August 5 with twelve vessels.[324]

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Admiral Boscawen, after cruising for some time off Toulon, returned to Gibraltar at the end of July, leaving ships stationed between that port and the strait so as to be promptly warned of our movements. On August 16, his frigates, ahead of our squadron, informed him that it had put to sea. Admiral Boscawen immediately set sail with sixteen ships.

During the night of the 16th to the 17th, the French squadron entered the strait, in overcast weather and a very fresh easterly wind. Despite these favorable conditions, it could not escape the attention of the English, who, warned of its arrival, kept an active watch. The enemy ships having been sighted, it was certain that we would be pursued. Although he had warned his captains of his intention to go to Cadiz, squadron leader de Laclue, believing that the English would look for him on the Spanish coast, decided to keep away from the land. Whatever the merit of this determination, it was not enough to take it; it was also necessary that each ship had the opportunity to know it. Around midnight, the *Océan*, the flagship, reduced sail and lit its stern lights, which it promptly extinguished so as not to indicate its position to the enemy, then it headed west-northwest. The commander-in-chief had been mistaken in thinking that the stern lights of his ship, lit for a very short time, had been seen by all his ships. The *Océan* had forced its sails as it passed through the strait, leaving behind the less sailable vessels; these, given the new route taken by the *Océan*, were bound to separate from the squadron. The captains of these vessels, convinced that their leader would go to Cadiz, as he had announced, headed for that port as soon as they were outside the strait.[325]

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After remaining at sea for twenty-four hours to await the squadron, they entered Cadiz. On the 17th, at daybreak, squadron leader de Laclue had only seven vessels united under his flag; the lookouts having reported eight vessels, he made a close haul to wind, under reduced sail, lulled by the hope that the ships in sight were the vessels that had separated from him during the night. Shortly after, eighteen sails were sighted. No illusions were possible; it was the entire English fleet that was in sight. The squadron took the closest course, forcing sail, in order to gain the wind from the enemy, but it was soon obliged to reduce its speed so as not to leave behind a very slow-moving ship, the *Souverain*. The squadron was then arrayed in the following order: the *Téméraire*, the *Modeste*, the *Redoutable*, the *Souverain*, the *Océan*, the *Guerrier* and the *Centaure*. Around two thirty, the best sailing ships of the English squadron reached the last ship in our line, the *Centaure*, of seventy-four, captained by Sabran; shortly after, the *Guerrier*, the *Océan* and the *Souverain* were joined by the enemy. These four vessels had English ships to windward and leeward, and, consequently, were fighting on both sides. The *Namur*, of eighty-two, carrying the flag of Admiral Boscawen, arrived, around four o'clock, abeam of the *Océan* and sent her full broadside. The *Namur*, after a short engagement, having lost her mizzenmast and her topsail yards, withdrew from the fire and Admiral Boscawen set his flag on the *Newmarck*. The *Centaure*, attacked at two thirty by the *Culloden*, had been cannonaded by all the English vessels which were coming upwind and leeward of the line. Fighting on both sides, she had been obliged, as a result of the losses suffered by the personnel, to successively disarm the forecastle battery and the upper battery; her topmasts were shot down and her hull riddled with cannonballs.[326]

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At 7:30, after fighting for five consecutive hours, the *Centaure* lowered its flag. Captain de Sabran and his crew deserved better fortune. The English only kept the *Centaure* afloat by dropping the cannons and anchors into the sea, and it was with the greatest difficulty, and thanks to the fine weather, that they succeeded in bringing it to Gibraltar. When night fell, the English ceased firing and took close haul, under small sails.

At daybreak on the 18th, the *Guerrier* and the *Souverain* were no longer in sight; The squadron was reduced to four vessels, the *Océan*, the *Modeste*, the *Téméraire* and the *Redoutable*. The enemy ships, covered with sails, were in pursuit. Squadron leader de Laclue gave the order to steer on land; he wanted to throw his vessels into the open sea and burn them after disembarking the crews. At nine o'clock in the morning, Captain de Carney beached the *Océan*, two leagues from Lagos. The Marquis de Saint-Aignan, imitating this maneuver, threw the *Redoutable* onto the coast, a short distance from the *Océan*. The two captains immediately set about disembarking the crews. An officer was sent ashore to inform the authorities of the situation of the French squadron and the intentions of the one who commanded it. Captains d'Herville and de Montvert, when they found themselves within the limits of territorial waters, dropped anchor near two forts built on the coast. The English, without worrying about the position of the *Téméraire* and the *Modeste*, anchored in neutral waters, opened fire on these two vessels. Captains d'Herville and de Montvert reached the land with their crews.[327]

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Enemy vessels came to position themselves behind the *Redoutable* and the *Océan*, firing on these ships and on the boats that were bringing the crews ashore. The *Océan* lowered its flag. The captain of this vessel was taken prisoner along with several officers and about fifty men, soldiers, gunners, and sailors: the rest of the crew had been able to disembark. Suffren, then a ship's lieutenant, was among the prisoners; having become the head of a naval division, he did not forget the conduct of our adversaries at Lagos. The English, after having consigned the *Océan*, the *Redoutable*, and the *Modeste* to the flames, took the *Téméraire* to Gibraltar. When the first cannon shots were heard from Admiral Boscawen's ships, the Portuguese authorities seemed to feel very keenly the insult to their flag, but this feeling did not last long. After sending a few cannonballs in the direction of the English squadron, the officers commanding the forts and coastal batteries remained spectators of the events, thus making themselves accomplices in the violation of the law of nations of which our enemies were guilty.

The Versailles cabinet made very strong complaints to Lisbon about the conduct of the officers who, under the guns of the forts they commanded, had allowed the English to attack and capture French ships. These officers were obliged to exhaust the means at their disposal to prevent this violation of the law of nations. The Court of Lisbon had the right and the duty to demand the restitution of the *Téméraire*, which the English had taken, and an indemnity representing the value of the three vessels burnt at Lagos, these four vessels having been captured within the limits of the territorial waters of Portugal.[328]

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Once this matter was settled with England, the Portuguese government would have dealt with us. This is how things would have happened if the Court of London, bowing to the rules of international law, had recognized the fault committed by Admiral Boscawen. But England, which had burned three ships and taken the fourth to Gibraltar, would not admit any claim; on the other hand, Portugal being an ally, not only faithful but useful, it deemed it necessary to give that power apparent satisfaction. An extraordinary ambassador, Lord Knowles, sent to Lisbon, declared before the assembled diplomatic corps that the King of England, regretting the event that had just occurred, presented his apologies to the King of Portugal. Lord Knowles added, which he probably did not do without a smile, that the officers of the English navy would henceforth be more circumspect. The five vessels that had entered Cadiz, seizing a favorable moment, were able to recross the strait and return to Toulon.

It will be recalled that the minister had laid up, at the end of 1756, twelve vessels out of the seventeen that made up the Mediterranean squadron, and this at a time when the English had more than one hundred vessels at sea, a reserve in their ports, ready to fill any gaps that might arise, and, in the shipyards, vessels whose completion was being pressed with the greatest activity. The crews of the twelve laid-up vessels were sent back to their quarters, and, consequently, the training acquired in the Minorca campaign was lost. The minister acted like the shipowners who, after each voyage, in order not to have to pay the crews' wages, lay up their ships while they are unemployed.[329]

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At the beginning of 1757, the minister, wishing to send some vessels to the Levant and others to the Ocean, had ships fitted out which, as soon as they left the port, put to sea to reach their destination. No one in Paris wondered if, under these conditions, a French vessel could, with any chance of success, fight against an English vessel of the same strength, fitted out since the outbreak of hostilities. It must be added that the training of crews was made more difficult every day by the government's conduct towards sailors. When the twelve vessels were disarmed, the crews had been dismissed without being paid either present or arrears. Knowing what awaited them, the sailors of the classes disappeared when it was a question of raising taxes; it was necessary to employ troops to search for them and take them to the ports. As soon as they embarked, the sailors seized the first favorable opportunity to desert. The good ones were especially rare; those went abroad, certain of having employment. When the project of landing in England was adopted, the minister ordered that three vessels be armed and added to the Mediterranean squadron. Although the minister had given a little money to pay the sailors on account, the recruitment of personnel continued to present great difficulties. During the time spent in the arsenal by the ships being armed, continual desertions occurred. This state of affairs continued until the day of departure. In these conditions, one can understand what the military training of the crews must have been like; the role of the officers was obviously very difficult at that time.[330]

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When de Laclue set sail from Toulon to go to the Ocean, of the twelve vessels under his command, six had been armed for some time, three had only completed the crossing from Toulon to Cartagena and from Cartagena to Toulon as part of a squadron, and three were leaving the port. Most of these vessels therefore had not and could not have had experience of squadron navigation. Should we be surprised that, crossing the Strait of Gibraltar at night, with his lights extinguished, de Laclue did not find the twelve vessels gathered under his flag the next morning? He may have mismanaged his squadron; There is even reason to believe that, in a hurry to get away, after having seen the English ships, he made the separation inevitable by setting too much sail. He is especially right to be blamed for having headed out to sea, after having warned his captains that he would go to Cadiz after leaving the strait. This indication constituted a rendezvous that he gave in the event of separation. After these observations on the conduct of the squadron leader, it is appropriate to indicate what responsibility falls to the minister. In any matter of war, it is not enough to examine the actions of the one in command; one must also realize the value of the instruments placed in his hands and the relationship existing between the forces placed under his orders and the mission with which he is charged. The disarmament, at the end of 1756, of the Toulon squadron, and the adoption of the system of arming ships as and when required, the conduct of the ministry with regard to the sailors of the classes, making the recruitment of personnel very difficult, the sending to sea of ships leaving the port and not having, consequently, sufficient military training, the departure order given to a squadron charged with a very difficult mission, since it had to find superior forces in the strait and on our coasts, while it did not yet have the necessary cohesion, such are the faults having a large part, if not the principal one, in the disaster suffered by the squadron commanded by de Laclue.[331]

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What was happening at Toulon, occurring in all our ports, one is led to conclude that the minister and those who presided over the direction of our naval forces were completely devoid of the knowledge that their job required.[332]

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BOOK XIV

The English cruise, off Brest, driven by bad weather, takes refuge in Torbay. - Departure of Marshal de Conflans. - Battle of Quiberon. - Losses suffered by the French squadron. - Part of our ships arrives at Rochefort. - Ships enter the Vilaine. - Thurot leaves Dunkirk. - His cruise. - Loss of Canada. - The English take control of Belle-Isle. - Capture of the island of Dominica in the Antilles. - Alliance of France and Spain. - Franco-Spanish troops enter Portugal. - Martinique. Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and Grenada fall into the hands of the English. - Expedition to Newfoundland. - Ships and frigates given to the government by the provinces and the major bodies of the State.

I

Admiral Hawke was cruising off Brest when a gale forced him to seek refuge in Torbay. Marshal de Conflans put to sea on 14 November, heading for Quiberon Bay with twenty ships. Squadron leaders de Beaufremont, Saint-André Duverger, and Guébriant de Budes commanded the fleet's divisions. The fleet, having set sail with a light breeze from the north-northeast, encountered contrary winds offshore, preventing it from making a direct route to its destination. On the 18th, it was calm about twenty-five leagues southwest of Belle-Isle. On the 19th, during the night, the wind having risen from the west, the marshal headed for the Gulf of Morbihan, which he intended to enter the next day.[333]

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The wind, shifting to the west-northwest, increased rapidly. "I was even obliged," said the admiral, "to make few sails for fear of finding myself on land too soon." The next day, M. de Conflans was to regret not having hastened more, because at daybreak, he was still far from Belle-Isle. Ships were sighted; shortly after, seventeen vessels were reported. As, among these, only seven or eight vessels were seen, M. de Conflans convinced himself that he had Commodore Duff's division before him. "I had no doubt," he wrote, "that it was the squadron of eight vessels that had been stationed for a long time in Quiberon Bay, which, having been warned of my departure from Brest, were putting out to sea to avoid being encountered by the King's fleet." From the start, one is struck by the inexperience of the commander-in-chief; having left Brest for five days, it did not occur to him that Admiral Hawke could have left Torbay, as he himself had left Brest. Full of confidence, not believing in the need to hurry, he had the ships in sight chased away without observing any orders. But things soon changed; what M. de Conflans saw was the English fleet coming from Torbay. Commodore Duff had been warned on the 16th that the French fleet was at sea; after giving the ships that were part of his division the order to join Admiral Hawke, he remained off Belle-Isle with his frigates to monitor our movements.

Admiral Hawke had left Torbay to resume his cruise on November 14, that is to say the day that Marshal de Conflans had left Brest. Informed by his scouts of the departure of the French fleet, he had immediately set out to search for it.[334]

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The English fleet, having been rallied since leaving Torbay by four fifty-gun vessels, formed a total of twenty-seven vessels, including one with a hundred guns and two with ninety guns. Admiral Saunders, coming from North America, anchored at Torbay shortly after the departure of this fleet. Without waiting for orders from the government, this admiral, convinced that his conduct would be approved, put to sea with ten vessels to join Admiral Hawke. The latter headed for Belle-Isle, knowing full well that he would find M. de Conflans in the vicinity of Quiberon Bay. After being carried out to sea by bad weather, he was running ashore on the morning of the 20th when the French fleet was sighted. The position of the two fleets, at about eight o'clock in the morning, was as follows: the French, coming from the southwest, were broad-breadthed towards Belle-Isle, and the English, who were coming from the west, were heading, downwind, towards the same point. In these conditions, the two fleets were rapidly approaching each other. To watch the French fleet, anchored in the harbor of Brest, to pursue it if it put to sea, and to fight it wherever he might encounter it, such were the formal, absolute orders that Admiral Hawke had received from his government. It was on him that rested the security of England, troubled and anxious, as it always is when it is a question of the invasion of its territory. Given the situation we have just indicated, the commander-in-chief of the English fleet had no need to make long calculations or long reflections; meeting the French, and having, on the other hand, the advantage of numbers over them, he had to concentrate all his efforts on a single aim: to join them and deliver a decisive fight. The enemy, who was not in order, occupied a large area. Admiral Hawke, understanding the necessity of delaying our march in order to allow the main body of his fleet to arrive at the scene of the battle, signaled the advanced ships to engage in action.[335]

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The French admiral was going to Quiberon to take, under his escort, the ships on which the troops destined to carry out the landing in England were to be embarked. A convoy carrying twenty thousand men could not set sail for its destination if the sea was not clear. Louis XV's ministers, instead of understanding, for this very reason, that we were unable to carry out the plan to land in England, had admitted the necessity, for the French fleet, of giving battle to Admiral Hawke. The Minister of the Navy, Berryer, pushing to the utmost limit his ignorance of the function he exercised, wrote to the Duke of Aiguillon: "The Marshal is not sufficiently skilled to be able to hope for a clever campaign from his skill that could contain the enemy and I regard a battle as inevitable; so it is better that it be given before our convoy is out to sea. If it is advantageous to us, we will pass easily; if it is doubtful, it can still facilitate the passage; if the squadron is crushed, the land troops will not be lost." Thus, the ministers left the fate of the expedition to the chance of a battle that, by all accounts, was bound to be unequal.

M. de Conflans initially appeared to recognize that the encounter with the English squadron was inevitable; after having prescribed the order of march on a line, he gave the signal to prepare for combat. The English, who were following our movements with the greatest attention, were convinced that we were making preparations for battle. Shortly after, the maneuver of the French fleet seemed to betray a change in the mind of its leader.[336]

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Indeed, he, having recovered from his first impression, saw only the grave responsibility weighing on him; ministerial illusions were far removed, and the truth was dawning on him. He was in no position to defeat the English, nor to cause them such damage that they would be unable to oppose the passage of the convoy. M. de Conflans then had no other thought than to avoid combat, and he persuaded himself that this result would be achieved if he reached the Gulf of Morbihan before the English arrived at the tip of Belle-Isle. He then signaled to force sail, but his orders, whatever they were, could not reduce the distance separating him from the point where he intended to lead his fleet. Instead of acknowledging that circumstances beyond his control forced him to fight, which was in accordance with the spirit of his instructions, the Marshal admitted, on the one hand, that he would be safe in Quiberon Bay, and, on the other hand, that he would reach this bay before being joined by the English.

Time passed and the two fleets were rapidly closing in. Around two o'clock in the afternoon, while the flagship *Soleil-Royal*, marching at the head of the French fleet, was passing the *Cardinaux*, the advanced ships of the English fleet opened fire on the vessels at the rear of our line. The enemy ships, as they came within cannon range, joined those of their own that were engaged. Our rearguard, while vigorously countering, continued its course towards the north. Should Admiral Hawke follow it and plunge with it into the Gulf of Morbihan? This question required an immediate solution. The pilot, insisting on the dangers that this maneuver would pose to the English fleet, Admiral Hawke said to him:[337]

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"You have fulfilled your duty by making this observation to me; now carry out my orders and lead me alongside the French flagship." The English army continued on its way, surrounding our rearguard, which it fought to windward and leeward. The English captains had a role that was perhaps difficult in terms of navigation, but very simple in terms of action. Fighting two or three against one, they had neither orders to observe nor precautions to take. Finally, the English had, in addition to superiority in numbers, the advantage that accrues to any fleet attacking the rearguard of an enemy retreating before it. The role of the French captains was very different, obliged to follow the admiral who continued on his way without giving orders, as if he were unaware of what was happening. The ships composing the first half of the French line had no adversaries, while the others were fighting against superior forces. The wind, passing to the north-northwest, broke our line, favoring, at the same time, the arrival of the English ships which had remained behind. At three thirty, the French admiral took the broadside which brought him closer to the point where the fighting was taking place. The *Formidable*, which carried the flag of the squadron leader Saint-André Duverger, after a glorious defense, was forced to surrender. The commander of the ship, brother of the squadron leader, was among the dead. The brave Captain de Kersaint, commanding the *Thésée*, pressed by several enemy ships, wanted to use his lower battery, but the water, entering through the gun ports from below the wind, engulfed the vessel; barely twenty men escaped this disaster. The *Héros*, after having put up energetic resistance to the numerous adversaries who were fighting it, lowered its flag; Captain de Sansay dropped an anchor.[338]

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The English, believing that this vessel was unable to move away, did not take possession of it. When night fell, Captain de Sansay cut the cable and beached the *Héros* in the harbor of Croisic. The *Juste*, after fighting several vessels, moved away from the battlefield and anchored on the coast; the two brothers, the ship captains of Saint-Allouarn, one captain, and the other second in command of the *Juste*, had been killed.

The *Soleil-Royal*, having arrived at the scene of the battle, exchanged a few broadsides with the enemy ships it encountered. M. de Conflans intended to put to sea, probably hoping that the greater part of the fleet would be able to follow him, but, in maneuvering to avoid collisions, he underwent a sudden change of course. The *Soleil-Royal*, finding itself unable to overtake the Four, M. de Conflans decided to anchor in the harbor of Croisic. Around five o'clock, night fell and the fighting ceased. The English, rallying to the flag of Admiral Hawke, dropped anchor under Duret Island. The French captains were looking for the *Soleil-Royal* in order to receive orders or to imitate its maneuver. Some, having seen the flagship heading south, put to sea and made for Rochefort where they arrived without being disturbed by the enemy. The ships *Glorieux*, *Inflexible*, *Robuste*, *Dragon*, *l'Éveillé*, *Brilliant*, *Sphynx*, as well as the frigates and corvettes were, at the end of the day, near the mouth of the Vilaine. Finding themselves in shallow waters, unaware of the intentions of the commander-in-chief, the captains of these vessels dropped anchor. Not receiving orders, not seeing any ship of the squadron, and convinced, on the other hand, that the entire English fleet would attack them the next day, they took, in council, the determination to enter the Vilaine.[339]

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On the 21st, at daybreak, Marshal de Conflans was able to ascertain that, of his entire squadron, only the *Soleil-Royal*, on which he had his flag, the *Juste* and the *Héros* remained in the bay. The flagship and the *Juste* were at anchor; we saw above that the *Héros* had been thrown ashore on the evening of the 20th by Captain de Sansay. The English fleet had not left its anchorage; during the night, two of its vessels, the *Essex* and the *Résolution*, had been lost on the Four.

Even before the enemy had made a move to attack him, M. de Conflans had the *Soleil-Royal* thrown ashore; when the vessel was stranded, he gave the order to evacuate it and deliver it to the flames. The *Héros*, whose crew had reached the land, was burned by the English. The *Juste*, maneuvering to escape the enemy, sank at the entrance to the Loire; most of the officers and crew were killed in this shipwreck. Such was the battle of Quiberon in which the French lost the *Soleil-Royal*, the *Héros*, the *Juste*, the *Formidable* and the *Thésée*. To these five vessels must be added the *Inflexible*, one of the vessels that entered the Vilaine, which was thrown ashore and could not be raised. The English, as we have seen above, had only to regret the loss of the *Essex* and the *Resolution*.

The plan to land in England, given the inferiority of our naval forces, did not bear examination. If Laclue's squadron had managed to reach Brest, the situation might have appeared better in Paris, but it would only have been so in appearance. It should not be forgotten, in fact, that Admiral Boscawen's squadron, no longer having to guard the port of Toulon, would have headed north; it would have joined the forces assembled by England to oppose the expedition.[340]

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In any case, after the disaster suffered by the Mediterranean squadron, there was no longer any hope of success. The government of Louis XV let things go, not because it had confidence in the outcome, but simply because it was incapable of making a decision. As there was no authority confident enough to impose its will, everyone gave orders. The Duke of Aiguillon, governor of Brittany, had command of the land troops; to please him, the transports, instead of anchoring in the harbor of Brest and in the ports located on the squadron's route, assembled at Vannes. This was a new difficulty added to all those that had to be overcome; It was indeed necessary for the squadron to find two favorable opportunities, the first to reach Quiberon, and a second allowing it to put out to sea with the convoy.

The navy, that is to say the only service able to give useful advice, was not consulted; as it showed no enthusiasm for the expedition, it was accused of timidity. "The timidity of our navy afflicts and humiliates me," wrote Marshal de Belle-Isle to the Duke of Aiguillon, "especially after the state in which I saw it at the beginning of the century. The king will have to give absolute orders to M. de Conflans. He would ask for nothing better, from what I hear, but that is not enough. "The Marshal of Belle-Isle is so foreign to the maritime question that he does not seem to suspect the profound difference existing between the navy of Louis XIV and that which France had in 1759. For the Marshal, the project of landing in England presents no difficulty; if "absolute orders" are given, success is certain.[341]

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Pontchartrain reasoned no differently when he sent instructions to Tourville for the 1692 campaign. The minister gave imperative orders, and these orders resulted in the disaster at La Hougue. What leader does the government place at the head of a fleet, which has the heavy burden of leading the convoy to the English coast, in the presence of a numerically superior enemy who is on his guard? A brave man indeed, having rendered services to his country, mainly in Saint-Domingue where he defeated the English; but M. de Conflans, who served honorably as a ship captain in the War of the Austrian Succession, does not figure in the encounters which have taken place at sea since the opening of hostilities, that is to say since 1756. In time of war, it is victory which makes marshals, and the head of our fleet receives this supreme reward even before having seen the enemy. M. de Conflans, having delivered his squadron to all hazards, instead of directing it, had not done his duty; but, in the loss of the battle of Quiberon, the responsibility of the ministers of Louis XV was greater than that of the head of the fleet. The government, after having imposed a plan of campaign which was dangerous only for the French navy, had given an incapable leader to the squadron charged with executing it.

In the particular engagements which occur in the course of this war, we are sometimes fortunate, but, more often than not, fortune is against us. It is easy to determine the cause, according to the reports of the English captains themselves. Let us cite a few examples. On February 21, 1759, the French frigate *Bellone*, of thirty-two, captained by Beauharness, fought the English frigate, of the same force, *Vestale*.[342]

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After a "desperate" engagement, according to the English report, which lasted four hours, the *Bellone* lowered its flag. What remained of its masts fell when the English took possession of it. The French frigate had forty men killed and a large number wounded; on the English frigate, the number killed was five and the number wounded twenty-two. The forty-gun French frigate, the *Danaé*, attacked on March 28, 1759, by the frigates *Southampton* and *Melampus*, defended itself vigorously. The *Danaé*, when it lowered its flag, had, according to the English report, thirty to forty men killed and a large number wounded. One man killed and two wounded on board the *Southampton*, and eight killed and twenty wounded on the *Melampus*, such were the English losses. The English frigate, the *Œolus*, of thirty-two guns, captured a small French frigate of twenty guns, the *Mignonne*. This had more than one hundred men disabled, out of a crew of one hundred and forty-three. The capture of the *Mignonne* had cost the *Œolus* only two wounded.

The frigate the *Arethuse*, of thirty-two guns, Captain de Vaudreuil, leaving Rochefort to go to Brest, was taken, on May 26, 1759, after a very lively engagement, by the frigates the *Tamise*, of thirty-two guns, and the *Vénus*, of thirty-six guns. The *Arethuse* had sixty men disabled, the *Tamise* fifteen and the *Vénus* four. The thirty-two-ship frigate, the *Vestale*, captained by Boisberthelot, having left Vilaine in January 1761 to go to Brest, was encountered and captured by the thirty-gun frigate, the *Unicorn*. The number of killed and wounded on the *Vestale*, says the English report, was very high. The *Unicorn* had five killed and ten wounded.[343]

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On January 23, 1761, the thirty-two-gun frigate *Félicité*, Captain Donnel, leaving Cherbourg and heading for Martinique, fought the thirty-two-gun English frigate *Richemond* before leaving the Channel. The French frigate succumbed; it had lost its captain and had about one hundred men killed or wounded. Its opponent, the *Richemond*, had three killed and thirteen wounded.

The losses suffered by these various vessels demonstrate both the energy of the defense and the weakness of the institutions; it is clear that our vessels are in a state of manifest inferiority relative to those of the enemy. For the Ministry of the Navy, a ship mounted with cannons is a warship. It never occurs to us for a single moment that cannons represent nothing if they are not manned by capable personnel. In the direction of operations as well as in the armament of ships, it is clearly seen that the maritime idea is still absent.

II

While we were making preparations for the English expedition in Brest, a division was being armed in Dunkirk to carry out a diversion by threatening the coasts of Scotland and Ireland. A famous privateer, Thurot, appointed captain of the flute, had command of this division, on which twelve hundred soldiers were embarked. Although the port of Dunkirk was being watched very closely by the English, Thurot, taking advantage of foggy weather, reached the open sea without being seen.[344]

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His division included the forty-four-gun frigate *Maréchal de Castries*, which he was riding, the thirty-six-gun frigates *Bégon*, the thirty-two-gun frigate *Blonde*, the twenty-six-gun frigate *Terpsichore*, and the eighteen-gun corvettes *Faucon* and *Amaranthe*. The news of Captain Thurot's departure caused alarm throughout England. The government, so great was the fear this valiant seaman inspired, took extraordinary precautions for the defense of the coasts of the United Kingdom. Light divisions were immediately sent in pursuit of the ships leaving Dunkirk. An English historian said: "The ministry, as soon as it learned of Captain Thurot's sortie, sent couriers to all the commanders of the troops in the northern part of Great Britain; they were ordered to keep the coastal fortifications in the best state of defense and to be ready to repel the French wherever they appeared. The greatest praise that can be given to this famous privateer is to report the alarm that his small armament caused in England." All the towns located near the coast requested troops and those that could not obtain any gathered militias. The town of Liverpool, which had had, since the beginning of the campaign, more than a hundred merchant ships captured by our privateers, was seized by a real fright. The authorities, assembled in haste, proposed to raise, at the expense of the inhabitants, twenty companies, each comprising one hundred men, and to erect batteries whose armament reached no less than fifty cannons.

As soon as he was at sea, Thurot headed north, capturing, on his way, merchant ships which he took to Sweden and Norway so that the English would lose track of him.[345]

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During this first part of the campaign, the bad weather, the cold, and the humidity caused great suffering for the crews and the soldier passengers. In the first days of December, the division headed south; keeping to the sea, in the middle of winter and at this latitude, it had to struggle, unsurprisingly, against continual gales. It was the end of January when our ships sighted land, north of Ireland. Separations had occurred, and the division consisted of only three frigates: the *Maréchal de Castries*, which Thurot was aboard, the *Terpsichore*, and the *Blonde*. The crews were extremely tired from this arduous voyage, and supplies were beginning to run low. Thurot learned, on the island of Ylay, of the loss of the Battle of Quiberon, but, assuming that this news was given to him to deceive him, and not wanting, on the other hand, to return to France without having attempted some military operation, he headed towards the coast of Ireland. The frigates dropped anchor on February 28, off Carrik-Fergus. About a thousand men, soldiers and sailors, put ashore, seized the town and the castle and took the garrison prisoner. Thurot, learning with certainty of the defeat of M. de Conflans, understood that he no longer had a role to play on land; after having embarked provisions which were given to him, at his request, by the town of Belfast, he set sail.

As soon as Thurot's presence off Carrick-Fergus was known, troops were set out to oppose the French landing. Three frigates, which were anchored at Kingsale, near Cork, put to sea. Hardly had Thurot gained the open sea when he saw the three English frigates near the Isle of Man; these, which were to windward, moved towards the French division and the action began.[346]

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Our ships, encumbered with prisoners and the sick, with some of their cannons in the hold, a measure made necessary by the poor condition of the hulls, were in no condition to fight ships leaving the port. Moreover, there was little unity in the resistance; the *Blonde* and the *Terpsichore* had not lined up with the division commander from the start of the battle. Two enemy frigates, skillfully taking advantage of this situation, attacked the *Maréchal de Castries*. The defense of this frigate was worthy of the man who commanded it. Thurot, seeing that he had a marked inferiority in this artillery battle, wanted to board one of his adversaries, but, due to the dilapidation of her masts and sails, he was unable to do so. The *Maréchal de Castries*, her masts down, her guns dismounted, was on the point of sinking. Thurot did not want to surrender; he was walking the deck, littered with dead and dying, encouraging the rest of his crew, when he was mortally wounded. The *Maréchal de Castries* then lowered his colors; the other two frigates succumbed shortly after. Captain Elliot, who, by virtue of his seniority, exercised command of the three frigates, received not only from the government, but from all parts of the United Kingdom, the warmest congratulations. The English were glad to be freed from the fear that Thurot inspired in them. However, we must say that the news of the death of the valiant privateer was received with a very strong feeling of regret. The reputation of Thurot, who may be called the Jean Bart of the 18th century, was very great in France, but it was perhaps even greater in England. Thurot was renowned, on the other side of the Channel, not only for his bravery, his extreme skill and his remarkable talents as a sailor, but also for his humanity, his courtesy and his generosity.[347]

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Public opinion honored the man whose motive for his actions was honor, not money. Thurot had left Dunkirk with five ships and had only three on the day he had to fight the English frigates. During the arduous crossing from southern Norway to northern Ireland, two ships, the *Bégon* and the *Amaranthe*, had been lost from sight. Nothing more was heard of the former; the latter went to the point assigned to it in case of separation. After waiting for several days, not seeing any ships of the division, the captain of the *Amaranthe* set sail by way of the west of Ireland, and arrived on February 24 at Saint-Malo with a crew, "dying of fatigue, hunger and thirst," according to the terms of his report.

We will conclude what relates to the English expedition by describing what happened to the ships and frigates that entered the Vilaine. The order to leave was sent to them from Paris as soon as the minister had in his hands the report of the most senior of the captains, Captain Villars de la Brosse. Berryer seemed surprised to learn that ten English ships, cruising in the Bay of Quiberon, constituted an obstacle that had to be reckoned with. He ordered the ships and frigates that were in the Vilaine to be disarmed; then, as if he had intended to publicly show that he accused the captains he had just dismissed of ill will or incapacity, by disarming their ships, he offered command of these same ships to officers who would undertake to descend the river without worrying about the English cruise. This was a serious breach of discipline.[348]

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Berryer had four vessels fitted out; he entrusted command of the first two to officers of the Royal Navy and that of the other two to officers of the Compagnie des Indes. The minister, by taking this last measure, seemed to proclaim the lack of confidence the officers of the State Navy inspired in him. This was yet another mistake he was making. The four rearmed vessels had barely set out to comply with the minister's intentions when the English division, stationed in Quiberon Bay, took up position at the mouth of the Vilaine. It would take considerable ignorance on the part of those in Paris who gave orders to assume that this would not be the case. The minister was therefore forced to recognize that the ships that had entered the Vilaine could only sail if a favorable opportunity presented itself. He had the ships given to the officers of the Compagnie des Indes disarmed, a measure that put an end to a situation that was hurtful to the naval officer corps.

On January 6, 1761, Lieutenants de Ternay and Hector, taking advantage of foggy weather, set sail with the ships *Dragon* and *Brillant*; eluding the surveillance of the English cruiser, they headed out to sea and arrived in Brest on the 10th. A corvette and two frigates left twenty-four hours after the ships; the first two ships reached Brest, but the third was captured. Lieutenants de Ternay and Hector, having returned to the Vilaine, managed to put to sea with the ships *Robuste* and *Éveillé*. Driven out by the English cruise, eight ships strong, which blocked their route to Brest, the French captains headed south and entered La Coruña where they remained blockaded until the end of the year. It was only in January 1762 that they arrived in Brest.[349]

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The vessels still in the Vilaine reached this port in April of the same year.

The history of the French Navy during this war ends on November 24. Berryer, whose incapacity had brought about the downfall of the navy, declared it useless. As financial matters dominated his decisions, he cut all expenditures related to it. The minister stopped supplying the port stores, lent the warships to trade, and soon our arsenals were empty of men and equipment. England, having become mistress of the sea, was able to send convoys laden with troops with impunity, without the escort of its fleets, to seize our colonies, the sole aim it pursued in waging war against us.

After the capture of Quebec, Admiral Saunders left for England, leaving a garrison of seven to eight thousand men there under the command of General Murray. Since the St. Lawrence was not navigable during the winter, the garrison found itself without communication with Europe. The Chevalier de Lévis, who had commanded the French forces in Canada since the death of the Marquis de Montcalm, gathered troops, joined by Canadian militias, defeated General Murray, who had come to meet us, and laid siege to Quebec. If he succeeded in taking control of it, the conquest of Canada by the English was still in doubt; for the French, it was a question of seizing Quebec before the arrival of the English fleet, and for the enemy, of resisting until the arrival of this same fleet. Now, at the beginning of May, the place continued to defend itself. Besiegers and besieged had their eyes on the river; on the 9th, an English frigate appeared, which was joined the following day by a frigate and a ship.[350]

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Mr. de Lévis, convinced that these ships were preceding a fleet carrying troops, lifted the siege and withdrew; two days later, Admiral Colville arrived with his squadron. The Marquis de Vaudreuil, Governor General of Canada, concentrated his remaining troops near Montreal, the point towards which all the enemy's forces would converge. In the first days of September, the city was invested. On the 8th, the Marquis de Vaudreuil signed a capitulation, which included some posts we still occupied not far from Montreal. Our North American colonies became, from that day on, the possession of England.

Pitt, who retained a predominant influence over all the actions of the English government, always had his eyes fixed on our ports, the destruction of which he dreamed of. The defeat suffered by the British troops at Saint-Cast had not discouraged him. The arrangements made to defend Brest did not allow it to be believed that this port could be attacked successfully, the Court of London resolved to seize Belle-Isle, lulled by the hope that this conquest would assure it a base of operations to attack Lorient, Rochefort and finally Brest, if circumstances became more favorable. The expedition left England on March 29; Commodore Keppel had command of the naval division and General Hogdson of the troops. Although warned for a long time of the attack that the English were planning, the government had not taken any of the necessary measures to keep Belle-Isle for France. The Marquis of Sainte-Croix, who commanded on the island, had barely two thousand five hundred men under his command; he prepared, nevertheless, to make a good showing.[351]

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On April 8, the English, who had landed at three different points, were received with such force that they returned to their ships with a loss of five to six hundred men killed, wounded, or prisoners. A second attempt was unfortunately crowned with success. Having established a foothold on the island, the English, due to their numerical superiority, were easily able to drive the French back first into the city, then into the citadel, which they began to besiege. The garrison defended itself with equal skill and courage, but saw its forces diminish daily, while the enemy received reinforcements with which it filled the gaps left by death or disease. By the beginning of June, we had lost a thousand men, and barely fifteen hundred remained fit to bear arms. On the 7th, the place being no longer tenable, the Marquis of Sainte-Croix, who could no longer maintain hope of rescue, signed a capitulation handing Belle-Isle over to the English. The latter, during the same month, seized the island of Dominica, in the Caribbean Sea.

Negotiations, initiated between the Courts of Madrid and Versailles, resulted, on August 15, 1761, in the conclusion of a treaty of alliance between France and Spain. The successes achieved by the English since they had been waging war against us inspired the most serious fears at the Court of Madrid. The Spanish wondered whether the Court of London, in its insatiable desire to extend Great Britain's colonial empire, would not think of seizing their colonies after having taken ours. England's ambition, its violent methods, its contempt for the law, only too well justified these apprehensions. But Spain allied itself with France too late to ward off the dangers with which it saw itself threatened.[352]

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The family pact, which brought no strength to France, was dangerous for Spain, whose navy was incapable of competing with England's powerful fleets. This situation was to pave the way for new triumphs for our adversaries. Spain, and especially France, had cause to complain about Portugal, whose conduct, in all circumstances, was subordinate to England's interests. We have seen, in particular, that in the Lagos affair, Portugal, by failing to enforce its neutrality, had led to the loss or destruction of four French vessels. The Courts of Madrid and Versailles made urgent efforts in Lisbon to obtain a common cause from Portugal against England. Portugal having declined this proposal, Spain and France declared war on it. The Allied Powers, if they succeeded in seizing Portugal, would have in their hands a pledge, in exchange for which they could easily obtain the restitution of their colonies. The plan was not without value, but, because of its very importance, it was necessary to employ major means, march quickly, and arrive in Lisbon before the English were able to assist the Portuguese. England, in fact, wasted no time in sending its ally troops, munitions, weapons, cannons, money, and good generals. The Franco-Spanish troops entered Portugal, but, after some successes, they were defeated and forced to retreat. Thus aborted the plan on which the two Allied Courts had placed their greatest hopes. England, reassured about the fate of Portugal, led a major expedition to Havana.

To all the maritime, military, and commercial reasons that drove the English to seize Martinique, there was one more whose importance could not escape them.[353]

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Numerous privateers, leaving the island's ports, were causing great harm to their trade. An expedition, comprising thirteen thousand men under the command of General Mouckton, headed for Martinique; a large fleet, commanded by Admiral Rodney, was to assist the army in the attack on Fort Royal and Saint-Pierre, the island's two important strongholds. Regular troops, in small numbers, and militias, very brave but poorly trained, were the only forces the colony could oppose to this powerful force. On January 7, General Mouckton landed, under the protection of the squadron, a short distance from Fort Royal. The English having succeeded in capturing the heights overlooking the town, the latter surrendered. This event threw the population into deep discouragement. The inhabitants, seeing the triumphant English arms everywhere, knowing that they had no help to expect from the metropolis, retreated from a struggle whose outcome they only too well foresaw. The English were making preparations to attack the town of Saint-Pierre, which they believed would put up a strong resistance, when General Mouckton received a deputation coming, in the name of the inhabitants, to discuss the surrender of the town. On February 13, the governor, Levassor de Latouche, signed a capitulation under the terms of which the island became a British colony. Grenada, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent followed the example of Martinique. The English found themselves masters of all the Caribbean; they had in their possession an uninterrupted line of islands and islets starting from the eastern tip of Saint-Domingue and extending almost to the South American continent.

During the year 1762, two ships and two frigates left Brest with orders to destroy the English settlements on the island of Newfoundland.[354]

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This division, commanded by the Chevalier de Ternay, captured the town of Saint-Jean on June 24, captured the corvette *Grafton*, and destroyed four hundred fishing boats. Learning that he was about to be surrounded by superior forces, the Chevalier de Ternay set sail, leaving fifteen hundred men ashore, who were taken prisoner. The success of this expedition was therefore far from complete.

The offensive and defensive alliance concluded with Spain and the confidence inspired by the Duke of Choiseul had revived public opinion. The Duke of Choiseul united in his hands the ministries of war and the navy, and the nation was lulled by the hope that he would raise the fortunes of France. The provinces and the principal bodies of the State offered the money necessary to build fourteen vessels, of fifty-four to ninety guns, and a frigate of forty-four. This gift was a proof of the patriotic feelings which animated the French, but it could not be, from the point of view of the war which we were waging, at that moment, of any use. However, it had an immediate consequence which was not without importance: it was possible to recall workers who, since the decision taken by Berryer to do nothing more for the navy, were without work.[355]

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BOOK XV

Situation of France in India after the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. - Struggle between the English and French Companies. - Dupleix is recalled. - Lally is appointed King's Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief in India. - Consequences of the squadron's slow crossing. - Battles of April 29 and August 3, 1758. - Departure of the squadron for the Isle of France. - Its return to India the following year. - Battle of September 10, 1759. - After a short stay on the coast, the squadron returns to the Isle of France. - Expedition by Count d'Estaing.

I

After the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, our situation in India was no worse than that of England. On the Malabar Coast we had Mahé, and the English Bombay; on the Coromandel Coast the English possessed Madras and Fort St. George, and the French Pondicherry and Karaikal. Peace had scarcely been signed when, in India, the French and English Companies, without openly fighting each other, began a struggle that was to lead to results that few people, at that time, however profound their minds, would have dared to indicate. Perhaps only Dupleix foresaw the possibility of a European power exercising absolute supremacy over the empire founded in the 16th century by Baber and his Moguls. This empire existed only in name; its leader, confined to his palace in Delhi, was without authority.[356]

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The men, placed at the head of the administrative districts that divided this great country, considered themselves independent sovereigns; they themselves had lieutenants who did not obey them. Conflicts arose between the provinces of the empire, which were settled by force of arms. The incursions of the Maratts, who came down from the mountains and pillaged the towns and countryside, added to the disorder that reigned in this country. In reality, power belonged to the strongest. While the authorities in Madras had the sole objective of developing trade, Dupleix, forming vast projects, thought of taking advantage of the anarchy to which the empire of the Great Mogul was subjected. He intended to extend his authority over immense territories which he would govern under the name of a chief, who came to power with his support. If a skillful policy was necessary to achieve such a great result, it was also necessary that this policy be supported by force. Now, Dupleix had a very correct feeling of what seasoned, disciplined European soldiers could do, fighting against the multitudes that made up the Hindu armies. Finally, he was convinced that natives, educated and commanded by European officers, should form good troops. As soon as circumstances permitted, Dupleix implemented the political system, the object of his meditations. The viceroy of the Deccan having died, many competitors sought his succession, weapons in hand. Dupleix chose the character suitable to play the role he intended for him, then he placed at the service of a cause, which had become his own, in addition to his skill, four hundred French soldiers and two hundred sepoys disciplined in the European manner. The triumph of this policy, on the diplomatic field as well as on the military field, was complete.[357]

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The Viceroy of the Deccan and the Nawab of the Carnatic were two protégés of France; both had accepted all the conditions previously imposed by Dupleix. Soon, the head of our establishments in India governed, with absolute authority, a country as large as France, and with no fewer than thirty million inhabitants. This was the most brilliant period of Dupleix's career. "This ingenious and ambitious Frenchman had," says an English author, "the understanding and practice of all the artifices of politics and war which, later, were employed with such resounding success by the English."

Deeply troubled by the events that had just transpired, the authorities in Madras sought ways by which they could halt the extraordinary development of the rival Company. Applying a rule which is, if one may express it thus, of constant use in such cases, the English offered assistance to the party over which the Viceroy of the Deccan, our protégé, had triumphed. A man, who was to leave a name in the history of India, Clive, had just started in Madras in the service of the Company; after some time spent in the offices, he had entered the army. Gifted with the most brilliant military qualities, he caused our allies to experience setbacks which made Dupleix's task more difficult. As soon as the new situation created by the genius of Dupleix was known in London, men and money were sent to the Governor of Madras, who was ordered to combat, with the greatest energy, the preponderance of the French Company. Now, far from being helped, Dupleix received letters from Paris in which his regret that trade was not the exclusive object of his attention was evident.[358]

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It was clear that the Committee of Directors condemned his policy. Although any illusions on this point were impossible, Dupleix did not abandon the fight. The resources of his mind, his profound knowledge of Indian politics, the limited means at his disposal, his own fortune, his influence—everything was done to maintain the position of the French Company in the face of its rival. Despairing of triumphing over such a man, the Committee of Directors in London appealed to the government, blaming the foreign policy of the cabinet for the events unfolding in India. The ministers, not unaware of the influence the powerful Company had in Parliament, intervened. They asked the French government to recall an agent guilty of serving his country too well. Sacrificing this illustrious servant was not only a shameful action but a fault, all the less justified since, for even the least warned, war between France and England was imminent. Now, with Dupleix recalled, it was the greatest strength of our establishments in India that was disappearing. The Versailles cabinet yielded; Louis XV was lulled by the hope that the continual concessions made to England by his government would remove all difficulties and would result in what he most desired, that is to say, the continuation of peace. He forgot that, to live in peace with one's neighbors, weakness is the worst of all means.

In a letter lacking clarity, or rather deliberately obscure, Dupleix was informed that one of the Company's senior officials, named Godeheu, was going to India to check the records and bring back to France clarifications that the correspondence from the trading posts did not provide to a sufficient degree.[359]

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In reality, Godeheu was leaving as the king's commissioner and general commander of the French establishments in the East Indies. He was carrying an order, signed by Louis XV and countersigned by Rouillé, instructing him "to arrest Mr. Dupleix and have him taken, under good and safe guard, to such place as he deems appropriate, and to have him embarked on the first ship leaving for France." However, the king's commissioner received, before his departure, a letter stating that he was only to arrest Dupleix if he refused to recognize his authority. On August 2, 1754, Godeheu disembarked at Pondicherry, surrounded by troops who had come on the ship that had brought him, and consequently having no connection with India; After having announced to Dupleix, without any consideration, the disgrace which had struck him, he took over the general government the same day. On October 14, Dupleix, led to the shore by all the honorable men that Pondicherry had, embarked to return to France; he was accompanied by his family, whom the authorities of Madras, and, consequently, the French government, seemed to fear as much as the former governor general himself. Shortly after Godeheu's departure, the minister, seized with remorse or understanding the extent of the fault committed, sent Dupleix the order to remain in Pondicherry, to settle there, in concert with Godeheu, certain questions which he indicated. The ministerial letter, carried by a ship with poor sailing performance, unfortunately arrived too late. Thus, in the midst of peace, without any effort on their part, without expenditure of men or money, the English, with the sole complicity of the French government, had succeeded in destroying the work of Dupleix.[360]

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Our allies, whom we were abandoning, eagerly sought the friendship of the rival Company; we no longer had, in India, either influence or credit.

"One could soon appreciate," says an English writer, "what a profound impression the recall of Dupleix and his replacement by a man as worthless and incompetent as Godeheu had made on the Muslim nobles of the Deccan. Until that moment, the name Dupleix alone had a magical effect. In their eyes, he combined all the energy and audacity of the Northern race, and the tact, flexibility, and skill of the Orientals. They felt that he was their master, and did not stiffen against his yoke." Their affection was mingled with respect, and their fear was tempered by veneration. The souhab himself called him his uncle when writing to him or speaking to him, and all looked upon him as a leader who could not fail. And now he was dismissed with every possible mark of ignominy, dismissed to be replaced by a governor who openly declaimed against his warlike enterprises and declared that the mission of the French nation in Hindustan was purely commercial! This declaration sounded strange indeed in the ears of the proud nobles of the Deccan, the descendants of those who had followed Abkar, and who considered commerce as the lot of an inferior race. It was not likely that they would consent to remain long subject to the representatives of such a policy.” Godeheu, replaced by Leyrit, governor of Chandernagor, left Pondicherry, going to France where he was eager to arrive to defend the conditional treaty concluded with the governor of Madras. In this treaty, dictated by the head of the rival Company, our interests were completely sacrificed. Godeheu left at the beginning of the year 1755 and, the following year, we were at war with England.[361]

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The government appointed Lieutenant-General Count Arthur de Lally-Tollendal to command India. Its choice fell on a man who enjoyed great respect in the army; he was regarded as a valiant soldier, possessing, moreover, the knowledge that makes good generals. Lally-Tollendal's father, a Jacobite who had come to our country with King James, had passed on to his son the feelings of hatred he had felt for England. Lally-Tollendal was full of ardor; he was leaving, nourishing the hope of driving our enemies from India. He was given three thousand men with the assurance that reinforcements would soon be sent to him. A squadron, commanded by Squadron Leader d'Aché, was to take him and his troops to their destination. This squadron, comprising Company ships and three government vessels, remained in India, with orders to participate in military operations that could receive useful support from the navy.

The squadron put to sea, but, having encountered bad weather upon leaving the port, it returned to repair its damage. The government, which was changing its plans every day because it did not have a well-defined plan, gave the order to disembark a thousand men and to remove two warships. Thus, the squadron, which was to fight against the naval forces of England in India, now consisted of only one government vessel. On December 30, 1756, the Chevalier de Soupire, who had already served in India, left Lorient with eleven hundred men. On May 2, 1757, the squadron, on which the commander-in-chief and the rest of the expeditionary force had embarked, set sail. D'Aché touched at Rio de Janeiro, where he left the crews to rest for longer than the mission he was entrusted with, then at the Isle of France, and on April 26, he arrived at Karikal, a small port located sixty miles south of Pondicherry.[362]

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The squadron set sail on the 28th to attack Gondelour. Two English corvettes, which were at anchor, seeing that they could not escape, threw themselves ashore. D'Aché, either because he had not received any information on the position of the English fleet, or because he had been badly informed, detached two ships of the Company, the ship *Comte de Provence* and the frigate *Diligente* to take Lally to Pondicherry. The next day, April 29, the English squadron was reported.

The French squadron was not in good condition to receive the enemy; Most of the ships had suffered significant damage during the crossing from the Isle of France to the Coromandel coast, the troops and equipment had not been disembarked, and, what was most serious, there were a large number of sick crews. The French squadron was arranged in the following order: the *Bien-Aimé*, fifty-eight, the *Vengeur*, fifty-four, the *Condé*, forty-four, the *Duc d'Orléans*, fifty-four, the *Zodiaque*, seventy-four, the *Saint-Louis*, fifty, the *Moras*, forty-four, the *Duc de Bourgogne*, fifty, and the *Sylphide*, thirty. Captains Bouvet, Christy-Pallière, Kerlero de Rosbo, de Surville, Gotho, de Monteil, de Joannis, Becdelièvre and d'Après de Mannevillette commanded these ships. Squadron leader d'Aché had his flag on the *Zodiaque*. The English squadron was arranged in the following order: the *Tiger*, of sixty, the *Salisbury*, of fifty, the *Elizabeth*, of sixty-four, the *Cumberland*, of fifty-six, the *Newcastle*, of fifty, and the *Weymouth*, of sixty. Vice-Admiral Pocock had his flag on the *Yarmouth* and Commodore Charles Stevens his flag on the *Elizabeth*.[363]

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The two squadrons, drawn up in line of battle, ran with their tacks to starboard, the English to windward of the French. The action began around two o'clock in the afternoon; at six o'clock, the two armies, which were in disorder, began to move away from each other, and shortly afterward the firing ceased.

The English had seven ships and the French nine, but it should be noted that ours, with the exception of the *Zodiac*, manned by the leader of our squadron, belonged to the Company; these ships, designed to carry cargo, were incapable of receiving the artillery that their numerous gun ports required. It is needless to add that each of them was inferior to a ship of the same rank, specially built and armed for war. Three ships, the *Condé* and the *Moras*, of forty-four, and the *Sylphide*, of thirty-six, very weak in sample, could hardly fight against the smaller enemy vessels which carried fifty guns and, even more so, against the others which had sixty and above. The training of the crews, from a military point of view, was insufficient; our fire was slow and badly directed. The *Zodiaque* distinguished itself by the skill of its maneuver; that of the other ships, with the exception of one, was satisfactory. The captain of the Duc de Bourgogne, who had kept out of the fire, was replaced, in his command, by Captain Bouvet. Vice-Admiral Pocock, dissatisfied with the results of the day, brought three captains of his squadron before a Council of War; the first lost his command, the second a year of seniority in his rank, and the third was broken. The battle of April 29 had been indecisive and neither squadron had the right to claim victory, but, from the point of view of the results, the advantage was on our side since the English, obliged to repair themselves, gave up on rescuing Gondelour.[364]

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The French anchored at Alemparvé, forty miles south of Pondicherry, and the English returned to Madras. During the few days spent in the harbor of Alemparvé, the squadron lost the Bien-Aimé, which ran aground and could not be raised. D'Aché, arriving in Pondicherry in the first days of May, disembarked the passenger troops, the equipment, and fourteen hundred sick and wounded. The crews were very weakened, and the lack of food and supplies would make it difficult for our ships to position themselves.

The slowness with which the squadron had crossed already weighed heavily on the results of the campaign. D'Aché had left Europe three months before Commodore Stevens, and yet the latter had arrived on the Coromandel coast five weeks before our squadron. The Commodore had joined Admiral Pocock, who had anchored in the harbor of Madras on February 24, coming from Bengal, and the English squadron, then seven ships strong, had put to sea on April 17 to meet us. Thus, until February 24, there was no enemy force on the Coromandel coast; by that date, Admiral Pocock had arrived, having been joined on March 24 by Commodore Stevens. If our squadron, instead of wasting time at Rio de Janeiro and the Isle of France, had appeared off Pondicherry in the first days of February, after a nine-month crossing, considered very slow even at that time, we would have been masters of the sea until the return of Admiral Pocock, over whom d'Aché would have had a marked superiority. Under these conditions, we were in a position to fight, separately and with advantage, Vice-Admiral Pocock and Commodore Stevens.[365]

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The slowness of the crossing made by our squadron had had even more serious consequences for the operations of the land troops. The Chevalier de Soupire, having left Lorient on December 30, 1756, as we saw above, landed at Pondicherry with his troops on September 8, 1757, after a crossing of just over eight months. He arrived at a decisive moment for the fate of the campaign.

The Nabob Nazim had seized the Calcutta trading post and had treated the English who had fallen into his hands with unprecedented cruelty. On hearing of this event, all the land and sea forces that the English authorities on the Coromandel coast could muster were directed to Bengal. There were barely a few hundred men left in Madras, whose fortifications were not yet completed; if we had attacked Fort David and Fort Saint-Georges, they would have surrendered, say English historians, at the first cannon shot. We therefore found ourselves in an exceptionally favourable situation that we had an imperative duty to take advantage of. This opportunity, which was never to occur again, Lally would never have let slip away. The governor of Pondicherry, Leyrit, indolent, indecisive, fleeing from responsibilities, shrank from the unexpected opportunities that fortune offered him. The Chevalier de Soupire, a very brave soldier, had no initiative; He waited for orders, but he did not ask for them. When the governor of Chandernagore, Renault de Saint-Germain, saw the arrival of the English forces destined to retake Calcutta, he understood that his security was threatened. Having only about fifty men, most of them sick, he asked for help from Pondicherry. Leyrit, alleging that he feared the return to the Coromandel coast of the troops employed in Bengal, sent him only one hundred men.[366]

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Clive recaptured Calcutta, but, fearing an offensive return from the nabob, he began negotiations with Renault aimed at concluding a neutrality treaty. Once an agreement was reached between the deputies of Chandernagore and the English, the treaty was drafted; the news was transmitted to Renault, who considered the matter closed. The founder of the British Empire in India, Clive, was devoid of all scruples; in his relations with Europeans and natives, he advanced towards his goals without ever worrying about the morality of the means. Clive deferred, under various pretexts, the signing of the treaty of neutrality, then, when he was certain that he had nothing to fear from the nabob, he informed our astonished envoys that he was going to march, with his troops, to besiege Chandernagore. Renault, defending himself with great vigor, prolonged the resistance as long as it was possible to do so with the limited resources at his disposal, but, attacked on the land side by superior forces, and, having, on the other hand, to respond to the fire of the English squadron, he succumbed. Thus, by the arrival of Lally, we had lost Chandernagore and left the English to conquer Bengal in complete freedom. The land and sea forces, employed by the enemy to obtain these results, had returned to the Coromandel coast; The fortifications of Madras, pushed forward with the greatest activity, were completed.

Such was the situation for the English. For the French, food and supplies were dwindling, and money was scarce; the era of hardship was beginning.[367]

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II

The French squadron was greatly weakened by the losses suffered in the battle of April 29 and the many sick it had disembarked. D'Aché found himself reduced to keeping his ships anchored in the harbor until, with their damage repaired, he would be able to set sail for the Isle of France. Lally, informed of this situation, left his camp in front of Fort Saint-David and rushed to Pondicherry. He took from his purse the money necessary to pay two months' pay, promised to the Company's sailors but not given to them; this act of justice persuaded all those who could afford it to leave the hospital and rejoin their ships. Finally, Lally placed four hundred soldiers at the squadron's disposal. The crews, thus reconstituted, were far from complete, but, under these conditions, d'Aché was able to fight the English squadron. On July 27, Vice-Admiral Pocock was sighted offshore. His squadron consisted of the following ships: the *Yarmouth* and the *Elizabeth*, each sixty-four ships; the *Tiger* and the *Weymouth*, each sixty ships; the *Cumberland*, each fifty-six ships; the *Newcastle* and the *Salisbury*, each fifty ships. Vice-Admiral Pocock had his flag on the *Yarmouth*, and Commodore Charles Stevens his guidon on the *Elizabeth*. [368]

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D'Aché set sail to meet the enemy with the following ships: the *Comte de Provence*, 54-gun, the *Moras*, 44-gun, the *Duc d'Orléans*, 50-gun, the *Zodiaque*, 74-gun, flying the flag of squadron leader d'Aché, the *Saint-Louis*, 50-gun, the *Duc de Bourgogne*, 54-gun, the *Condé*, 44-gun, and the *Vengeur*, 54-gun, captained by de Lachaise, Becdelièvre, de Surville, Gotho, Forgeret de Langery, Bouvet, Kerlero de Rosbo, and Christy-Pallière.

On August 3, around one o'clock in the afternoon, the two squadrons, running on port tack, with easterly winds, the English to windward of the French, the battle began; at three o'clock the firing ceased. The action had been very heated. Squadron Leader d'Aché, Vice-Admiral Pocock, and several French and English captains were wounded. In this affair, we had eight ships and the English seven, but seven of ours belonged to the Company, and two of these ships, the *Condé* and the *Moras*, of forty-four, had played a very insignificant role, as, indeed, had happened in the battle of April 29. In reality, we were inferior to our adversaries. D'Aché headed for Pondicherry, and the English, who had been very badly treated, returned to Madras.

The French squadron managed, not without difficulty, to repair the damage existing in the masts, but several ships were leaking and almost all needed to be caulked in the bilges. The number of sick was increasing; the flagship, a vessel of seventy-four, had barely three hundred men; one can judge from this what the numbers of the other ships must have been. Lally, ready to give soldiers to reinforce the crews, wanted d'Aché to seek out the English squadron and deliver a new battle to it, in order to make it impossible for Vice-Admiral Pocock to rescue Madras, which he intended to attack.[369]

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The squadron leader wrote a letter to the Council of Pondicherry, which had forwarded Lally's request to him, detailing the situation of our ships. "None of my ships," said d'Aché, "is in a condition to risk a third battle; the majority of my sailors are killed, wounded, or attacked by the bloodletting, and without sailors, one can neither maneuver nor fight; all my masts are completely damaged by the cannonballs that pierce them; all my rigging is spliced and in a sorry state; several of my ships have damaged rudders, others are leaking heavily." Finally, gentlemen, my ships are mistreated and cannot fight in the wind, as you saw in the last battle of August 3, where, having the wind, I was obliged to yield it to the enemy who, taking advantage of this great advantage, fought me in such a way as to risk nothing and to crush me with their heavy artillery. Five of my ships are only fit for balloting, and cannot serve as warships." After recalling that the bad season would force him to leave the coast in a month, d'Aché asked the Council to indicate to him what it was possible to undertake, while the colony was devoid of resources and without money. The leader of the squadron, assuming that he would fight a new battle, added: "After the event, whatever it was, would you have enough to replace a yard or a single sail of my ships? Do we not know that the last resources are exhausted? I act, Gentlemen, in good faith and with all my heart for the glory of the King's arms, which I have preserved until now and which I do not wish to compromise."

D'Aché left Pondicherry on September 3, 1758, heading for the Isle of France, where he anchored on November 13.[370]

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The squadron was far from being welcomed with satisfaction by the governor, who possessed neither provisions nor equipment; the ministry, in its shortsightedness, had left the island in complete destitution. A few ships, prepared for sea with great difficulty, were sent to the Cape of Good Hope, from where they brought back supplies that were promptly consumed. D'Aché and the island's authorities found themselves in an extremely difficult situation; the squadron leader constantly requested supplies for his crews, while the governor saw, with very legitimate fear, the colony threatened with famine. The squadron was reinforced by three ships, the *Minotaure*, the *Illustre* and the *Actif*, from Europe, under the command of squadron leader Froger de l'Eguille. Given the situation we have just described, it is easy to understand that our ships were in no good position either to sail or to fight when d'Aché put to sea on July 17, 1759. After touching at Bourbon and Madagascar, the squadron headed for the Coromandel coast. On September 10, near Porto-Novo, a Dutch trading post, located ten miles south of Pondicherry, the English squadron was reported. It was arranged in the following order: the *Elizabeth*, sixty-four, the *Newcastle*, fifty, the *Tiger*, sixty, the *Grafton*, sixty-eight, the *Yarmouth*, sixty-six, the *Cumberland*, fifty-eight, the *Salisbury*, fifty, the *Sunderland* and the *Weymouth*, sixty. The English had, in addition, two ships of the East India Company and a fireship. Vice-Admiral Pocock mounted the *Yarmouth*, and Rear-Admiral Charles Stevens, the *Grafton*.[371]

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The French squadron consisted of the following ships: the *Zodiac* and the *Minotaur*, each of seventy-four; the *Centaur*, each of sixty-eight; the *Illustre* and the *Actif*, each of sixty-four; the *Comte de Provence*, each of fifty-eight; the *Vengeur*, the *Saint-Louis*, the *Duc d'Orléans*, the *Duc de Bourgogne*, and the *Fortuné*, each of fifty-four; captains Gotho, d'Eyville, de Surville, Chevalier de Ruys, de Beauchesne, de Lachaise, Christy-Pallière, de Joannis, de Surville, de Mahy, and de Beaulieu. Squadron leaders d'Aché and Froger de l'Éguille had their own flags, the former on the *Zodiac* and the latter on the *Minotaur*.

With the two squadrons running on the port tack, the English to windward of the French, the action began around noon. It was sustained on both sides with extreme vigor; there were soon, in both squadrons, vessels with numerous damages. Captain Gotho, of the *Zodiac*, was killed; of Aché, hit by a projectile, having left the deck for a few moments to allow his wound to be dressed, the officer, who had taken command of the *Zodiac*, let the ship bear away to rally some of our vessels, which had fallen to leeward. The captains of the vessels which had kept their stations, imitated the maneuver of the *Zodiac*, which they supposed to be made under the orders of the commander-in-chief. The English, who had suffered greatly, far from following them, held the wind and the firing ceased. It was then four o'clock; Night came and the two squadrons lost sight of each other. The English anchored at Negapatam and the French headed for Pondicherry where they dropped anchor on the 15th. We had lost, in addition to Captain Gotho, Captain de Surville of the *Centaure*; an English captain had been killed and two others were wounded. We had eleven ships, of which only four belonged to the State, while the English squadron, out of the eleven ships of which it was composed, had nine warships.[372]

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Thus, the English squadron, taken as a whole, was stronger than ours; on the other hand, in terms of personnel, we were extremely weak. There was not a single ship fully manned, and among the men present, there were a large number weakened by deprivation. We must therefore praise the crews for the energy they had displayed and add that their conduct reflected credit on those who commanded them.

D'Aché, during his stay on the Isle of France, had received two million francs and munitions that he was to deliver to the authorities in Pondicherry; he had taken one million to meet the needs of the squadron and brought the other. The satisfaction his arrival brought to the colony was not long-lasting. D'Aché declared that the state of his ships required his immediate departure for the Isle of France. He wrote to the Count of Lally: "On the 10th of this month, I fought a very fierce battle against the English squadron, off Trinquebar. We mistreated each other, and I received a considerable wound; but here is some help that I am giving you; I give you, with all my heart, some money that I have in my ships, to relieve you as best I can; moreover, I am disarming them to reinforce you with some white soldiers and the majority of the Blacks that I have in my squadron; but also this is all that I can do. Expect nothing more from me. The season is drawing on, my ships are in poor condition; I am leaving, my dear general, and I am sacrificing the pleasure that I would have in seeing you to that of returning to the coast next year." This letter was barely in Lally's hands when the Council assembled and immediately took a decision entitled: "Representation made to Mr. Count d'Aché, by MM. of the Council of Pondicherry, in the name of the Nation assembled as a body."[373]

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The Council demanded, with the strongest urgency, that a new battle be delivered to the English squadron; it seemed convinced, according to the information coming from Karikal and Négapatam, that the latter, whose damage was considerable, would be crushed. The Council was particularly keen on this solution, "the only one," it said, "that could restore our fortunes." If this first method was not adopted, it proposed a second. D'Aché would not leave the coast until the English squadron was itself forced to leave. Perhaps the Council was under some illusion about the possibility of destroying the English squadron. D'Aché, who was aware of the arrival in Madras of Rear-Admiral Cornish with four ships and two frigates, was not deluded by this hope. He believed that this reinforcement gave Admiral Pocock such superiority that he could no longer engage in battle offshore without running the almost certain risk of being defeated. Moreover, he was not in a good position to repel the enemy's attack on a harbor where land batteries could not protect it. In any case, d'Aché formally refused the pressing requests made by Lally and the Council to adopt one of the two proposed methods.

The Council, which, for this occasion, enlisted a number of inhabitants, assembled. The deliberation, in which he spoke out very strongly against the departure of the squadron, was addressed to the Count of Aché. The latter was at sea when this protest reached him; he returned to Pondicherry, and after a few days spent in the harbor, he took the road back to the Isle of France. His arrival once again put in a critical position a colony which had no food and even less the supplies necessary for the squadron.[374]

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At the beginning of 1760, all the ships in the harbor of Saint-Louis were driven ashore in a hurricane, sustaining extensive damage; they were raised, but it was impossible to repair them. The situation became such that most of the ships, lacking cables, remained stranded. The few ships that could be made seaworthy, by completely disarming the others, were sent to Madagascar to live there so as not to starve the colony. The squadron did not reappear on the Coromandel Coast in 1760, which thus found itself handed over to the English navy.

Count d'Estaing, who was serving in the army, left the Isle of France at the end of 1759 with two Company ships, the *Condé*, a forty-four-gun ship, and the *Expedition*, a small ship carrying eight cannons. The two ships, after capturing a ship of the English Company which was at anchor under the batteries of Muscat, on the south-east coast of Arabia, at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, went a short distance from Muscat to Benderabassy, an English establishment, protected by a fort. An English frigate, which was at anchor, set sail as soon as it saw us, but, joined by the *Condé* before being able to reach the open sea, it lowered its flag. The fort, vigorously cannonaded by the French ship, capitulated. Count d'Estaing headed for Sumatra, where several English establishments were located. After capturing Fort Marlborough, which defended one of them, then the town of Tanapooly, and destroying several trading posts of lesser importance, Count d'Estaing returned to the Isle of France. This rapid campaign, in which the enemy, especially considering the weakness of the means employed, had suffered great damage, did great honor to Count d'Estaing and to the two ships placed under his command.[375]

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This was, for the leader of this expedition, the starting point of a new career: at the peace, the Count d'Estaing entered the navy with the rank of squadron leader.[376]

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BOOK XVI

Lally arrives in Pondicherry. - His first successes. - He finds no assistance from the Company's agents. - He fails before Madras. Capture of Pondicherry. Departure of Lally for England. - Causes to which the unfortunate outcome of the Indian campaign must be attributed. - Examination of the conduct of the squadron leader. - Lally arrives in Paris. - He is imprisoned in the Bastille. - His trial. - Lally is condemned to death and executed. - Unfairness of the sentence pronounced against him. - His memory is rehabilitated. - Negotiations are initiated in 1761 with a view to concluding a peace treaty. - Question of the captures made before the declaration of war. - The negotiations fail. - They were resumed in 1762. - The preliminaries were signed on November 3, and the final treaty on February 10, 1763. Conditions of this treaty.

I

We have seen that the Company's ship, the *Comte de Provence*, aboard which was the new commander-in-chief, had anchored on April 28, 1758, in the harbor of Pondicherry. An incident, announcing great negligence in the artillery service, marked Lally's arrival. The land batteries, saluting in his honor, sent three cannonballs into the hull of the *Comte de Provence* and two into her rigging; fortunately, no men were injured. It was an ominous beginning. Lally disembarked, surrounded by young officers, who had come with a keen desire to distinguish themselves.[377]

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The general had barely set foot on land when he inquired about the enemy's military situation; he could not be given any precise information on the English forces or the state of the positions they occupied. On our side, no preparations had been made; there were no stores containing the supplies necessary for an army; finally, the transport of artillery was not organized. The entry of troops into the field seemed to have been unforeseen by anyone. One can imagine what a man must have felt who had accepted this post in India with the legitimate ambition of playing an important role in the war with England. How could he have expected such a state of affairs, when instructions from Paris had long since made it known to the authorities of Pondicherry that the destruction of the English establishments on the Coromandel coast was the goal towards which all their efforts should be directed. Disembarking at five o'clock, Lally gave orders for troops to be directed towards Gondelour; three hours later, the designated men were on the march, under the command of Count d'Estaing.

The next day, the general went in person under the walls of this place, which he seized in a few days. During this short campaign, an error was made which, if repeated, would have been exceptionally serious. Ignoring the distinction of castes, or not wanting to take them into account, Lally, who had no means of transport, requisitioned the natives en masse. Part of this fault, which could have resulted in alienating the population, must be attributed to the authorities of Pondicherry, whose lack of foresight was the determining cause of the impolitic decision taken by the general.[378]

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He returned from Gondelour complaining that the governor had given him no assistance, but his discontent was even greater when he marched against Fort Saint-David. Food, artillery, and the equipment necessary for a siege had to be waited for. Thanks to the general's activity, the skill of his dispositions, and the valour of his troops, Fort Saint-David, a position considered impregnable, fell into our hands on June 2. The garrison was taken prisoner of war. Count d'Estaing wrote: "Success alone has shown us the feasibility of this enterprise." Our troops occupied Daricotte, a place abandoned by the English.

Five weeks had passed since Lally's arrival and three positions, one of which, Fort Saint-David, was of the greatest importance, had been taken from the enemy. To complete the work, it was necessary to take Madras, this was what the general wanted; but how could this result be achieved when the English squadron was anchored in front of this place? It was necessary to defeat this squadron or, at least, by keeping it under the fear of an attack, make it impossible for it to disembark its crews. Now, we remember that d'Aché, resisting the most pressing demands of the general, had declared that the state of the forces placed under his command did not allow him to lend his assistance to this operation. Forced to abandon the project that was closest to his heart, that is to say, the attack on Madras, Lally, yielding to the pressing requests of the Council of Pondicherry, marched on Tanjore, the rajah of which had long owed the Company a considerable sum that he refused to pay. The only advantage of this expedition was to procure the money necessary for subsequent operations.[379]

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Lally was about to capture Tanjore when he was suddenly recalled to shore; Vice-Admiral Pocock was threatening Karikal and an enemy force was approaching Pondicherry. The troops, during the Tanjore campaign, had suffered the greatest hardships; none of the promises made by the administration for the provisioning of our soldiers had been fulfilled.

Lally held the most extensive powers from the Company. All governors, councilors, commanders, officers and soldiers, and the inhabitants of the French settlements were ordered to recognize Lally as the King's Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief, and to "obey him in all that he might command without any restriction whatsoever." The Directors had portrayed all the Company's agents in the most unfavorable colors, asserting that the greatest corruption reigned in Pondicherry. In all the transactions necessitated by the Company's business, the employees found sources of illicit gain; most of them became wealthy, while the shareholders received nothing. The Directors had therefore insisted that Lally, by carrying out a thorough examination of all the services, put an end to the abuses against which people had been protesting in vain in Paris for many years. Thus Lally had two mandates, one military, the other civil; he was to drive the English from the Coromandel coast, and restore order in an administration which was said in Paris to be devoid of all honesty; the second mandate was perhaps the one to which the committee of Directors seemed to attach the most importance. On the other hand, the Company, retaining with one hand what it gave with the other, had retained Leyrit's position as governor, and the powers of the Council of Pondicherry. Lally could preside over this Council, but, as nothing had been innovated, as far as voting was concerned, the latter remained master of his decisions.[380]

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If a struggle broke out, and it was inevitable, between those who profited from the abuses and the Commissioner General, charged with suppressing them, a center of resistance against any reform was organized by the Company itself. Lally clearly saw that the money entering the Company's coffers disappeared with such rapidity that none was ever left for the army's needs. The accounts showed considerable sums for food, supplies, and transport, and the army was in complete destitution. Several times already, troops in the field had gone for days on end without receiving food.

On returning from the Tanjore expedition, Lally expressed feelings of the most lively indignation against the administration's conduct; From that day on, a gulf opened up between the general and the agents of the Company, which nothing could bridge. The indolent, disturbed in their tranquility by the fever of activity of the new commander-in-chief, the people who profited from the abuses and those who, for whatever reason, had an interest in the functioning of the administration not being examined too closely, united, criticizing the actions of the general, his military operations, sowing discord everywhere, recruiting adherents, not only among the civil employees, but also in the ranks of the officers and soldiers of the Company. The royal troops themselves, who were deceived by accusing the general of being the author of their distress, rose up; they were owed, at that moment, ten months' pay. Lally overcomes all obstacles; he brings the troops back to duty and, taking advantage of the absence of the English squadron which left the coast at the beginning of the bad season, he marches on Madras.[381]

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The undertaking presented difficulties all the greater because we barely had superiority in numbers over the enemy; on the other hand, disunity, the result of the intrigues hatched against Lally, reigned in our camp. Lally had little food, insufficient equipment, and was penniless; however, the native soldiers disbanded when they were not paid. Lally counted on the bravery of the troops, whom he would lead by his example. On February 16, 1759, measures were taken to launch an assault at the beginning of the night, when, in the afternoon, the English squadron, carrying landing troops, appeared. Not only was the city of Madras liberated, but the presence of the English fleet became a threat to Pondicherry, whose garrison consisted of three hundred invalids. Lally had to abandon his enterprise. If the authorities of Pondicherry and the employees of all ranks of the Company had, since the beginning of the expedition, done their duty, the assault would have been delivered and the city, in all probability, would have been taken before the arrival of the squadron. Lally having this conviction, one must understand the feelings he was animated by in leaving Madras. His enemies did not hide the joy they felt at this failure; if Lally drove the English from the Coromandel coast, he acquired, by such a brilliant action, an authority, an ascendancy, allowing him to punish all the faults, all the embezzlements committed since the beginning of the campaign. Now, the guilty parties, knowing the general's inflexible severity, knew that no one, whatever their rank, would be spared.

The Court of London, pursuing its plans for colonial conquest with unwavering tenacity, sent powerful reinforcements to India.[382]

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The English took the offensive, pushed back our posts and came, with an army of fifteen thousand European and native troops, to blockade and then invest Pondicherry. Lally deployed all the energy he could muster to defend himself, but on January 16, 1761, with only one day's supply left, he found himself forced to surrender the place to the head of the English army, Colonel Coote. The garrison was reduced to eleven hundred men, of whom barely half were fit to bear arms, and it should be added that the men, considered able-bodied, were exhausted by deprivation. The same hatred and the same calculations pursued Lally after this unfortunate event. The general was defeated, but he was about to return to Europe; it was certain that he would call down the government's severity on all those who had betrayed their duties. After fearing that he might be victorious, his arrival in Paris was dreaded.

The day Lally was to leave Pondicherry to be taken to Madras as a prisoner of war, a gathering formed near his home. Those who composed it, as soon as the general appeared, went towards him, uttering insults and threats. The detachment of English cavalry, charged with escorting the general, was some distance behind; approaching quickly, it pushed the crowd aside. The latter, maintaining a hostile attitude, the English officer, whose honor would have been compromised if violence had been committed against the person in his care, asked the general for permission to disperse the gathering by force. "Do nothing," he replied, "the punishment for these crimes must be reserved for the French courts." Dubois, the army quartermaster, arriving shortly after, was attacked by the same men who were waiting for the general and killed after a short struggle.[383]

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The papers that this quartermaster was carrying disappeared; however, it was known that they contained damning evidence against the Company's agents whose embezzlement had halted the military operations. Colonel Coote had captured Pondicherry in the name of the English Crown, but, yielding to the pressing demands of the Madras Council, he handed over his conquest to the Company. The head of the English trading post, Pigott, probably ignorant of the consideration due to an unfortunate adversary, used disparaging methods towards Lally during the latter's short stay in Madras, and he forced the general, although he knew him to be ill, to leave for Europe during the bad season, on board a small Dutch ship, on board which there were neither the facilities nor the resources to accommodate a passenger, especially a passenger of this distinction. After a difficult crossing, Lally disembarked in England on September 23, 1761.

II

Lally had not requested to be sent to India; this post had been requested for him by the Directors of the Company. When the delegates of the Committee presented this request to the Minister of War, the Marquis d'Argenson, he spoke to them as follows: "I know better than you what M. de Lally is worth, and what's more, he is my friend; but we must leave him in Europe. His activity is nothing but fiery.[384]

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He does not compromise on discipline, abhors anything that does not work properly, is frustrated by anything that does not move quickly, knows nothing of what he knows, and expresses it in terms that are not forgotten. All this is excellent among us; but in your Asian trading posts, what do you think? At the first negligence that compromises the king's service, at the first appearance of insubordination or roguery, M. de Lally will thunder, if he does not crack down. His operations will be frustrated to take revenge on him... Go and deliberate on all this, and come back to me. "The same delegates having presented themselves again to declare that the Company maintained its request, the Marquis d'Argenson said to them: "You want it, I wash my hands of it. Take warning, and order your agents to proceed in a straight line. As for us (addressing the Duke of Fitz-James and the Earl of Thomond), let us preach to our friend moderation, even in doing good, and patience, even in seeing evil done." These words, if they were really spoken, were prophetic; things followed very exactly the course indicated by the Marquis d'Argenson. But what should we think of the conduct of the minister? The latter is fully convinced that the very qualities of the general are an obstacle to the success of the mission that the Company wants to entrust to him, and nevertheless he bows to the request of the Directors. Lally's place, in his opinion, is in Europe and he lets him go to India. What results can a country achieve whose affairs are conducted in this way?

The unfortunate outcome of the Indian campaign must, first of all, be attributed to the government, which waited until the end of 1756 to send relief to Pondicherry. When d'Aché returned to repair the damage to his ships, a thousand men out of the three thousand promised to the Company were taken, two government ships out of three, and part of the money.[385]

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There were neither provisions nor equipment for the squadron on the Isle of France or on the Coromandel Coast. This alone is sufficient to explain the loss of India, and the responsibility for this event falls entirely on the government. This first point established, it remains to examine what those who were charged with defending our establishments in India did with the meager resources at their disposal. It must be said that Leyrit and Soupire lost precious time; able to attack Madras, while the English squadron and the majority of the troops were in Bengal, they remained inactive.

Lally's role did not begin until April 29, 1758. The starting point of the misfortunes of the campaign carried out by this general is the slowness of the squadron's crossing. We have seen that, having left Lorient on March 2, 1757, it did not appear on the Coromandel coast until April 28, 1758. Lally had undertaken the operations from which Leyrit and Soupire had recoiled, but when he arrived, the English, after having taken Chandernagore and conquered Bengal, had brought their land and sea forces back to the Coromandel coast. Lally has, apart from his knowledge of Indian politics, which is difficult to reproach him for, all the qualities necessary to fulfill his mission; but, in this country, where he was sent by the thoughtless desire of the Directors and the weakness of the Minister of War, he needs the assistance of all those who, in any capacity, are in the service of the Company. But he does not find this support. From the day he lands in Pondicherry, the situation becomes clear: the general cannot count on the Company's agents, whose torpor he tries in vain to shake off and patriotism. The Company wants to be defended, but it intends not to pay.[386]

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France, and to better combat their former leader, they attacked him with more violence than they had done until then. The word treason was uttered. Under the government of Louis XV, when everything was given over to disorder and intrigue, no one could say what the outcome of such an affair would be. It was no longer a question of justice, but a struggle for influence; and Lally's adversaries were powerful. His friends, realizing the dangers he was running, advised him to go abroad and wait for a more favorable moment before returning to France. Lally loudly rejected this proposal, convinced that, once confronted with his enemies, which he had long desired, he would be able to confound them. He was under great illusions, and his friends judged the situation better than he did.

Locked up in the Bastille, Lally remained there for nearly two years without being questioned. In 1763, Parliament took up the case and prosecuted him for bribery and high treason. The complaints he had filed were dismissed, while the accusations against him were admitted; his accusers became witnesses for the prosecution in the trial brought against him, and these witnesses testified against their former leader with all the greater determination because they were fighting for their own safety. He was denied all legal assistance, and he was not allowed to have a Council. We are seized with indignation at seeing this unfortunate general obliged to discuss, with less qualified subordinates, with people whom he has punished or whose bad conduct he has publicly noted, his administrative acts and his military operations. It is reported that the senior substitute demanded "complete absolution on any part other than the military part, for which the king would be begged to appoint a Council of War".[387]

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This was the true solution to a case that the government should never have submitted to Parliament. The Attorney General unfortunately did not share this opinion, and he concluded in favor of a death sentence. On May 5, 1766, Lally appeared before the Grand Chamber of Parliament, and on the 6th, judgment was pronounced. They were willing to acquit him of the crime of high treason, but he was sentenced to be beheaded for "abuse, vexation, and having betrayed the interests of the king."

Never was a more unjust sentence handed down, and it is not permissible to think that the judges believed Lally guilty, and especially guilty of having betrayed the interests of the king, a formula, moreover, indicating nothing specific, and probably used to cover up the weakness, or rather the nullity, of the accusation. Either Parliament was corrupted by Lally's enemies, or, happy, while it had grievances against the Crown, to hold an important personage in its hands, it sacrificed the general to the vain satisfaction of showing its power. Whatever the motive which directed its conduct, Parliament, in condemning Lally, rendered a judgment dishonourable to justice. On May 8, the king, far from seizing this legitimate opportunity to use his right of pardon, rejected the request for commutation of sentence presented to him, in the name of the army, by Marshal de Soubise, supported by the Minister of War. The important part which, in the opinion of Marshal de Saxe, Lally played in the victory of Fontenoy, was forgotten. On the 9th, Lally was led to the scaffold, in a cart, with a gag over his mouth; His enemies breathe, because they know that the inflexible general would have forgotten nothing and that, if he were alive, the day of justice would have come. Lally's execution allows them to enjoy in peace the immense fortunes they have amassed.[388]

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The day after the execution, the reaction against Parliament's ruling began, and a blush rose on the brows of all those who, while able to prevent it, had allowed this legal assassination to take place. Everyone, and the king first and foremost, tried to clear their responsibility. Time passed, no doubt remained about the injustice committed by corrupt judges, and the day came when Lally's memory was rehabilitated.

III

"Since we do not know how to wage war," said the Duke of Choiseul at the beginning of 1761, "we must make peace." Proposals to this effect were addressed to the Court of London. Pitt believed that the time had not yet come to end hostilities. The English, masters of the sea, wanted to pursue the conquest of the colonies they coveted, knowing full well that we could not put any obstacle in the way of their plans. It was therefore with the sole aim of accommodating the opinion of Europe that Pitt welcomed the overtures made by France. Plenipotentiaries were appointed on both sides. The question of the restitution of the prizes taken in 1755 could not be omitted in the discussion of the peace treaty; it was all the less to be lost sight of since it was of a general and not circumstantial nature. It was, in fact, an important point of international law, affecting both the present and the future.[389]

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The English claimed that the three vessels, the *Alcide*, the *Lys*, and the *Espérance*, and the three hundred merchant ships had been taken in retaliation for the hostile acts committed by the French in North America. However, not only did we dispute this assertion, but we accused the Anglo-Americans of having had, after the conclusion of the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, no other objective than to aggrandize themselves at our expense. How, moreover, could we admit that merchant ships, sailing to all parts of the world, on the faith of treaties and confident in peace, could have been captured as a result of alleged hostile acts committed in the depths of America, in countries whose boundaries were not precisely defined? The disputes between the military leaders and the subjects of the two nations in North America could lead to misunderstandings between the Courts of London and Paris, and even lead, by degrees, to a rupture, but, as long as war was not declared, the security of individuals had to be complete. The declaration of war has, in fact, for its purpose, to inform the inhabitants of the countries, deciding to settle their differences by arms, that there exists a new state of affairs, obliging them to take the necessary precautions to safeguard their persons and their fortunes. If this rule, established by the law of nations, and written, as far as the navy was concerned, in the treaties of Utrecht and Aix-la-Chapelle, ceased to be observed, there would no longer be any security for navigators. This was the question which it was appropriate to clarify at the time when the negotiations were about to open.

The French plenipotentiaries demanded that the ships taken in 1755 in violation of international law be returned to their owners, and that they receive compensation commensurate with the losses they had suffered.[390]

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The Versailles cabinet, in order to reach an agreement more easily, declared that it would refrain from any claim regarding the three vessels captured in 1755 by Admiral Boscawen's squadron. The Saint-James cabinet haughtily rejected the proposals of the French government. The demand for the restitution of prizes taken at sea before the declaration of war was not based, it said, on any particular convention or on the law of nations. In the opinion of the Court of London, there was no principle less open to dispute than this: "That the full right of all hostile operations does not result from a formal declaration of war, but from the hostilities which the aggressor first used." England used arguments which turned against her. France did not dispute that the right to exercise hostilities does not always result from the formality of a declaration of war, but, in this hypothesis, provided for by the treaties, the merchant vessels, being in the respective ports of the belligerents, had the right to withdraw in complete freedom. It was obvious that the measures taken to safeguard the interests of the shipowners whose vessels were placed in the position we have just indicated, should, with no less reason, apply to the vessels which were at sea, at the moment when an unforeseen rupture occurred, that is to say without a preliminary declaration. These latter vessels had, like the former, the incontestable right to return to their country without being disturbed. France, conforming, despite England's conduct, to this rule dictated by equity, and which, moreover, formed an integral part of international law, had returned to England not only the vessels in its ports at the time of the breach, but also those which had been taken at sea before the declaration of war.[391]

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A note from London, regarding the resolution of several difficulties raised by the discussion of the treaty, contained the following: “With regard to prizes taken after hostilities had begun, and before the formality of a declaration of war, the King persists in believing that such a request on the part of France is neither just nor sustainable, according to the most incontestable principles of the law of war and of nations." No argument, however valid, could have any effect on the English, who refused to be convinced. Among nations, having no other objective than commercial monopolization, self-interest takes precedence over honor.

Pitt's demands, the haughty and cutting tone he adopted with us, and perhaps also the secret hope entertained by the Versailles cabinet of concluding a treaty of alliance with Spain, caused this attempt to fail. The negotiations, begun in April, were broken off in August. France and Spain signed the family pact at that time; but in Paris, people did not long entertain illusions about the support our ally could give us. Moreover, in France, the navy no longer existed, the army was barely able to maintain itself on the defensive, and we no longer had any finances. Peace was becoming, for us, an imperative necessity; new approaches were made to the Court of London to achieve this result. Pitt rendered the greatest services to his country, but, passionate about war, he spent without counting and even took a certain pride in never worrying about the question of money. The debt continued to grow, and every year the taxes were heavier.[392]

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The loans with which Pitt provided for the needs of the war were, in his eyes, only proof of England's wealth. Cooler minds, frightened by the disorder reigning in the finances, wondered if this situation would not have serious consequences in the future. Although the war party was still very powerful, a large number of members in both Houses showed a disposition favorable to peace, and thereby expressed very strong opposition to the government and especially to the leading man in the cabinet, Pitt. The latter, informed by his agents that the Courts of Madrid and Versailles had concluded a treaty of alliance, wanted England to declare war on Spain, even before knowing the contents of this treaty. Since his cabinet colleagues did not accept this proposal, Pitt seized this pretext to resign. Events showed that he had judged the situation correctly, since Spain declared war on England, but no change of heart occurred in his favor among the men of the party who believed the time had come to enter into negotiations with Spain and France, with a view to concluding a peace treaty.

It was, for the Versailles cabinet, a favorable circumstance that Pitt was no longer in charge of foreign affairs; however, it was important not to entertain too great illusions on this point. The ministers, even those most inclined towards peace, had such a high opinion of England's successes that they were determined to be extremely demanding. On the other hand, our situation was less good than at the time of the breakdown of the first negotiations in 1761, since the English had made new conquests since that time.[393]

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Finally, our alliance with Spain could not intimidate the Court of London and, consequently, lead it to make concessions to us. Not only had the English quickly assessed the weakness of their new adversary, but, having nothing or very little left to take from us, they saw in the Spanish colonies a very rich prey which, to this already great merit, added another, highly appreciated one: that of being easy to seize. Such was the situation when new negotiations opened in Paris during 1762. The Duke of Choiseul represented France, the Marquis of Grimaldi represented Spain, and the Duke of Bedford represented England. An initial incident almost called everything into question.

The English wanted the right to garrison the islands of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon, which the proposed treaty had granted us. The Duke of Choiseul refused to accept this claim. The English plenipotentiary, declaring that his instructions on this point were imperative and that he was not permitted to deviate from them, the Duke of Choiseul told him: "In that case, war, and you can leave whenever you please." The Duke of Bedfort, convinced that he was rendering a service to his country, gave in on this question. Everything seemed decided when a second incident once again suspended the course of negotiations. The English, as we have seen above, had sent a fleet with troops to attack Havana. The Duke of Bedfort wanted to take advantage of this as if he were assured of England's success. The Marquis of Grimaldi, on the other hand, claimed that since the English were heading for certain failure, the result would be an improvement in the conditions imposed on Spain.

The Duke of Bedford, wishing to hasten the resolution of all the points in dispute, proposed to put the attempt on Havana outside the debate: neither Spain nor England, he said, would be able to take advantage of the outcome, whatever it might be.[394]

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The Marquis of Grimaldi, persisting in his opinion, the negotiations were halted. Things were at this point when news arrived from Havana; after a three-month siege, the city had been taken. A capitulation, signed on August 12, had given the English the island of Cuba, the Spanish fleet, consisting of nine ships and four frigates, a considerable sum of money, and a large quantity of merchandise. The Spanish loss was estimated at seventy-two million francs. The garrison of Havana, which had vigorously defended itself, was, at the time of the city's surrender, reduced to seven hundred men. The Spanish government had not been prudent enough, before declaring war on England, to send sufficient forces to defend this important colony. The English had, moreover, captured Manila; it must be added that they had suffered a complete defeat in an expedition directed against Buenos Aires.

Negotiations resumed their course, but on a basis much less favorable to Spain. The preliminaries were signed on November 3, 1762, and the definitive treaty on February 10, 1763. Spain ceded Florida, Fort Saint Augustine, and Pensacola to England. By a secret convention, concluded on November 3, France gave Louisiana to Spain to compensate that power for the sacrifices it was making in favor of peace. We were the only victims of the war. The treaty of 1763 is one of the most unfortunate that our annals have had to record. France ceded to its rival Canada and, which seriously affected our maritime prosperity, Cape Breton Island and all the islands and parts of the coast that we occupied in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.[395]

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Cod fishing played an important role from both the naval and merchant marine perspectives. The Duke of Choiseul had tried, but failed, to reject this condition; if we did not accept it, we would have to renounce the peace treaty. However, the fishing rights, although diminished, continued to exist.

Not content with securing the present, the English wanted to secure the future and demanded that France renounce all claims to Acadia and Nova Scotia. England ceded the islands of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon to us, not without difficulty. The Senegal River, our establishments on the west coast of Africa, Grenada, Saint Vincent, Dominica and Tobago were henceforth to belong to England. This power took back Minorca, in exchange for Belle-Isle, and restored to us, on the coast of Africa, Gorée, and, in the Antilles, Guadeloupe, Marie-Galante and Martinique; one of the so-called neutral islands, Saint Lucia, was given to us. France regained possession of the various trading posts that we occupied on the coasts of Coromandel and Malabar, as well as in Bengal, at the beginning of the year 1749, and restored to England the conquests made by Count d'Estaing on the island of Sumatra. The town and port of Dunkirk were to be put in the state fixed by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle and previous treaties.[396]

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